

**Übersetzung von Christian Liemersdorf / Bonn und  
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Tom  
a THW volunteer  
- Operation in France -

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THW = Federal Technical Emergency Relief Service of Germany



My name is Tom. I'm a volunteer of THW (Technisches Hilfswerk), the Federal Technical Emergency Relief Service of Germany.



I'm Max, Tom's son. That's my dog Wuschel. We think Tom is doing a great job for THW.



My name is Marcel and my cat's name is Minou. We live in France.



Today the THW team once again is very busy: Tom and his companions are preparing the vehicles for the next operation. This does not take very long, but has to be done quite carefully, because they will go on a long trip to France. A heavy storm has caused serious damage to power supply lines over there.

*Balloon:* "We will be ready in a minute!"

Many people have no longer electricity there. In such cases THW can provide assistance. They offer their relief in Germany and in other countries after storms, floods and other disasters. The big electricity generator, which is a mobile power station, is quickly attached to the truck by Tom`s friends. Boxes with tools are loaded.

"Be careful, Lisa, don't drop the boxes with our food!", Hans shouts. They call him also "hungry Hans", because he is very fond of eating. Carl, the head of operations, is on the phone again, as usual. "Speedy Fritz" is hurrying along, he almost forgot the suitcase with the plans for the operation. Max and Wuschel are very excited.



Everything is packed up, the tool boxes are on board and the electricity generator is attached. Max and his friend Marie would also like to go on this trip, but they know that this is not possible.

“I’ll call you as soon as we arrive”, his father promises. The engines are roaring and off they are.



“Have a good journey, take care of yourself”, they call waving after the THW team until the convoy of blue vehicles has disappeared behind the next corner.



The blue vehicles with Tom and his companions, who come from various regions of Germany, head off for their destination in France.

France and Germany are neighbors and belong to Europe. On their way through France Tom and his team will also pass by the Eiffel tower, which stands in Paris, the capital of France.

“Wow, this is where they have the best food in the world, they say”, Hans sighs and would rather stay there. But the trip must go on, because it’s a long way to their destination on the Atlantic Ocean.

They can’t start working today, because it’s already dark and everybody is very tired after the long drive. Tom calls at home though, as he had promised.

Max had already been waiting for some time by the phone:

“At last, Dad”, he shouts into the phone. Tom talks about the long trip:

“We have arrived and we’re doing fine. We will start working immediately in the morning. Good night, Max, sleep well, I’ll call again tomorrow.”



This is the first day of the operation.

Oh no! The road to the site of operation is blocked by overthrown trees. “No problem, we can easily manage this.” The chainsaw is started immediately and the road is cleared within a few minutes. Hungry Hans uses the pause for a second breakfast. Tom is inspecting the power supply lines: “Oh dear, there is still a lot of work to do.” The power supply line to the small village has been damaged. The people in the village can’t cook, can’t watch TV and they don’t have electric light. Many devices just don’t work without electricity, but help is coming soon.

*Balloon:* “Oh no!”



*Balloon:* “Bonjour Monsieur, what are you doing there?”

After clearing the road, the THW team gets to the village. Fortunately, nobody has been injured. Tom starts working on the transformation unit immediately. But where is Hans? Oh well, he is having another snack to keep himself fit. “Bonjour Monsieur, what are you doing there?” Marcel, a boy from the village, asks curiously. “I am transmitting electric power to your homes”, Tom says. “How’s that? Did you bring the electricity from Germany?” Tom laughs. “On the big trailer there is a diesel engine which drives a generator.” And right now the engine starts rattling and power is transmitted from the transformer unit to the homes. “We are so glad to have power again”, the people say and they offer the THW people tasty food and drinks to express their gratitude to them.



Another day has begun. The work today is to clear the village of the destruction caused by the storm. Tree trunks are sawn in pieces and removed. Marcel brought his father Pierre. “Can you also remove the tree from the roof of our house?” Pierre asks. “All our cranes are occupied and it’s too dangerous to do this without a crane.” Tom is examining the site: “We have a crane called Vitus, which should be able to handle this.”

And indeed! A few minutes afterwards crane Vitus under supervision of Carl, the head of operation, is lifting the tree from the roof. They did it! Marcel’s family is delighted: “Merci, merci beaucoup, you really did an amazing job.” “If I just found Minou, this would be the happiest day in my life!” Marcel says. “Who is Minou?” Tom asks. “Minou is my little cat”, Marcel explains to Tom.

Tom calls his family again in the evening. "What have you done today?" Max asks. "We supplied a village with electricity and removed fallen trees.

I also met Marcel, a French boy, whose cat Minou has been missing since the storm. We even removed a tree from Marcel's house with a crane. Fortunately, the roof was not damaged, so the family could stay in the house." "So you were really busy", Max replies. "Tell Marcel, I'm really sorry for his cat and I do hope, he will find her soon. Call me again tomorrow, please, and sweet dreams, Dad."



This is going to be a great day for Marcel. Tom promised him a ride on the multipurpose bulldozer. "We will drive around the village, to see, where help is still needed." "Can we also search Minou?" Marcel asks. "Sure, we can." Tom answers. "I have also a boy, his name is Max and he is about your age."

"Does Max also like riding on the multipurpose bulldozer?", Marcel asks. "Oh yeah, as often as possible, he can't get enough of that."



They stop at many houses to ask for Minou. Marcel's friends would also like to go with them and Tom allows them to get on as long as there is enough room for them. Suddenly Marcel gets very excited: "Stop, I saw something moving over there." He quickly climbs down the multipurpose bulldozer and runs to the edge of the road. Indeed, it is Minou! He is petting her head and is very happy.



This is the last day of the operation of THW. Marcel is allowed to help them. Together with Lisa, he locks up the site of operation to keep pedestrians and cars off the area: Stop, you can't go any further! New power poles are set up. Other members of the team are sawing poles in pieces, which were broken by the storm. A few people are watching Fritz curiously, while he is climbing a pole with climbing irons on his feet. He repairs the power supply lines high up on the pole. Hans, who is supposed to hand him the tools, is having a nap after a big breakfast.

All power supply lines have been repaired and all homes in the village have electricity. The people have invited the THW team for a farewell party. They serve Baguette, the long French bread, cheese and other delicious food. "Try our red wine", Pierre invites Tom, "it comes from this region."



They are sitting together talking until late at night. "I have never seen such a storm.", an elderly lady says. "The tiles of my house flew through the air like leaves." The people in the village would like to know, how the THW people live in Germany, do they have a family and kids? "Please, visit us again together with your families", they suggest to the THW team. "That's a good idea", Tom reckons. Max would surely love to go to France. When they finally go to bed, they all agree: This was certainly not the last party they celebrated together.

In the next morning it is time to say goodbye. This is very hard for Hans, because he is going to miss the delicious food. “Au revoir, visit us again soon”, Marcel’s dad Pierre says. Marcel calls: “Don’t forget to bring along Max. Bonne chance – good luck and have a nice journey back!” Tom gave Marcel his blue THW cap and Marcel gives him a little box. “It’s a present for Max!”



The THW people are getting on their vehicles, the engines are started and they are leaving for Germany. The French people are waving after their new friends: “We will help you whenever there will be a similar storm in Germany!”.

After many hours of driving, the THW team arrives at home. Max and all the others have already nervously been waiting for them. Hans and Tom get off the big equipment wagon. Max is running towards Tom and jumps into his arms.



He is so glad that his father has come back. The words are just sputtering from his mouth: "Tell me everything! Have all poles been reerected in France?" Tom laughs and gives him the small box. "What's that?" Max asks.



"It's a present from Marcel", Tom replies. Max unwraps it immediately and calls with excitement: "Look here, a real French fire engine. My friends won't believe it!"



The Federal Technical Emergency Relief Service of Germany is an relief organization, which provides technical assistance and skills to fight civil disasters in Germany and abroad.

Max and Marie are looking forward to becoming members of the THW youth organization, where they will find reliable friends. The young members meet in the evenings for games and sports activities, go together on bike tours or excursions, meet to discuss environmental problems etc. In addition, they learn through play, for example, how technology can be used to help people, how injured people should be transported, how emergency bridges are built or sites of operations are illuminated at night.

Tom and many of his companions were also members of the THW youth organisation, where they learned a lot of what is now useful for their everyday day work and activities.