

CONVECTION

by
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Convection - [Late Latin *convectiō*, *convectiōn-*, from *convectus*, past participle of *convehere*, *to carry together* : Latin *com-*, *com-* + Latin *vehere*, *to carry*; see *wegh-* in Indo-European roots.]

The Free Dictionary by Farlex -

<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/convection>

Human Hail - Germany, Europe. 1930.

'Human hail' fell in Germany over the Rohn mountains in 1930. Five glider pilots, caught in a thundercloud, baled out of their gliders and were carried up and down within the super-cooled cloud until they fell to earth, frozen within ice prisons. Only one survived.

The Guinness Book of Oddities

Geoff Tibbals

Guinness Publishing, 1995.

ISBN 0-85112-661-8

The signs and symptoms of hypothermia follow a typical course, though the body temperatures at which they occur vary from person to person depending on age, health, and other factors. The impact of hypothermia on the nervous system often becomes apparent quite early. Coordination, for instance, may begin to suffer as soon as body temperature reaches 95°F (35°C). The early signs of hypothermia also include cold and pale skin and intense shivering; the latter stops between 90°F (32.2°C) and 86°F (30°C). As body temperature continues to fall, speech becomes slurred, the muscles go rigid, and the victim becomes disoriented and experiences eyesight problems. Other harmful consequences include dehydration as well as liver and kidney failure. Heart rate, respiratory rate, and blood pressure rise during the first stages of hypothermia, but fall once the 90°F (32.2°C) mark is passed. Below 86°F (30°C) most victims are comatose, and below 82°F (27.8°C) the heart's rhythm becomes dangerously disordered. Yet even at very low body temperatures, people can survive for several hours and be successfully revived, though they may appear to be dead.

The Free Dictionary by Farlex -

<http://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Hypothermia>

Character List

Ernst - Chemist

Axel - Doctor

Hans - Lawyer

Gerd - Blissful man

Peter - Hanging lifeless on stage

In a dark nimbus cloud the only sound is hail cutting the wind and pelting against taut linen. Intermittent flashes of lightning silhouette five lone figures. They are hovering in a current of the large cloud; rising and falling at different rates coming in and out of the sight of the audience at times. All are dressed in fine brown woolen suits and have harnesses and cords of extending upwards to unseen parachutes. They are all in a rough line appearing to be standing in mid-air (from left to right - Ernst, Axel, Hans, Gerd, Peter), covered in a cake of ice while four shiver hug themselves from the cold; Peter, on the far right, floats in a contorted solid shape. Gerd is initially above the others and out of sight.

NOTE: Although stuttering would undoubtedly exist in this cold environment it is omitted because I feel that it takes away from the tempo. However, the slurring of speech does occur later on.

AXEL: How long have we been here?

HANS: God only knows.

AXEL: Do you think we'll make it out?

HANS: Have you seen Peter? [*Hans gestures towards Peter with his head*]

AXEL: [*Looking over*] Yeah.

HANS: The cold will kill us too, if the lightning doesn't get to us first.

AXEL: There hasn't been much thunder so far. I think that if that was going to kill us we would have already been killed.

ERNST: [*Coughs*] The air is what's going to kill us, before the lightning, and before the cold.

AXEL: What's up here that's not in your cigars?

ERNST: Many number of things, Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane for one.

HANS: We're not all chemists, Ernst.

ERNST: It's a pesticide. And that's only what the farmers' use. Do you know what factories pump in the sky these days?

AXEL: There you go insulting a working man. What has a farmer ever done to you except grow the food on your plate?

ERSNT: Nothing. Except that I'm eating vegetables that are drowned in chemicals, chemicals that the farmer knows nothing about. I guess really the farmer doesn't know any better. Or if he does he chooses to ignore his instincts because higher yield equals higher profit. The people who should know better and have influence enough to stop it just let them keep using it. To make matters worse, clouds of these kinds of pesticides are used in public areas, like beaches, just to kill off a few mosquitos. Mind you, this is with no regard to the environment or people alike. It's amazing that we don't all keel over now from just one potato.

AXEL: No one has died from eating a potato.

ERSNT: Except for the Irish.

AXEL: Bad taste, Ernst. And besides that was because of a fungus, not chemicals.

ERSNT: It doesn't matter. The point is that no one knows the effects of these chemicals and still they are just being thrown around. Did you know, for instance, that an enantiomer, that is, a chemical of the same composition but a mirror image of itself, can mean the difference between life and death in medicine? And that ... [*Gerd enters the scene from above*]

GERD: Hello?

ERSNT: What? [*looks confused at Gerd*] What was I saying?

GERD: Nothing in particular. [*Gerd starts playing in the air like as if he he's swimming etc. and looking around briefly before getting pulled back up*] Goodbye. [*with a hand waving like a child's*]

ERNST: [*He looks away the others towards the audience*] I get the idea that I'm saying something important and nobody's listening.

AXEL: That's not true.

ERNST: [*turning his head back to Axel*] It's manners, that's what it is. You're too polite. You can't even be honest enough with me to say that you don't have any interest in what I'm saying.

AXEL: I didn't say that.

ERSNT: You didn't have to. It's patronizing.

AXEL: Will you please stop scolding me for something that I didn't say! Gerd said it and he doesn't even know what's going on.

[Long Beat occurs where thunder roars and a huge gust of wind pulls Peter's lifeless form out of stage. They all look towards Peter floating away out of sight upwards.]

AXEL: [Looks away first] Someone will save us. I'm sure of it.

ERSNT: Who would?

AXEL: I don't know. But someone will.

ERNST: No one will. It's not even possible. And better yet, why would he or anybody else save us even if it was?

HANS: Because we're suffering.

ERSNT: [to himself] Because we're suffering? [to AXEL] Let me ask you a question. When was the last time you walked in the heart of the city, downtown?

AXEL: A few days ago I suppose when I was called in for a malpractice suit.

ERSNT: How many people would you say you saw sitting without a home, without food, and begging for money?

AXEL: I couldn't guess.

ERSNT: But you can concede that it was a lot?

AXEL: Sure.

ERNST: How would you consider their situation?

AXEL: In what sense? It's clearly not a desirable situation.

ERSNT: Would you say that they were suffering.

AXEL: A good portion of them at least.

ERSNT: And did you give alms at all to any of them?

AXEL: I gave a mark to a woman who grabbed my arm.

ERSNT: But did you take her into your house.

AXEL: No.

ERNST: But you could've, right? If you wanted to.

AXEL: I suppose so.

ERNST: But you didn't and that's my point. You gave her some change lying around in your pocket. It was the price you paid so you could walk by without having to pay her any more attention. It required no effort of any kind. No, we're here to stay. Even if it wasn't difficult no one would come to our aid.

AXEL: What would you suggest I do then? Invite all of them to come and live in my house? My house couldn't fit all of them even if I tried, and I most certainly couldn't afford to feed and clothe them all.

ERSNT: Maybe it needs to be a communal effort.

[Long Beat where a single light shines down on the men from stage right. They all start lowering slowly.]

ERNST: The storm's letting up.

AXEL: We're saved.

HANS: No.

[The light fades away and the men start rising again. Peter re-enters the scene. Axel looks nauseous and dry heaves. He struggles to pull out a handkerchief and wipe his mouth]

AXEL: I can't feel my nose, let alone my fingers. How am I supposed to run a practice if I can't use my hands? [*Beat where the others flex their fingers too.*] God, where did that storm come from? We could've gone gliding any other

day and never have had such an experience. Why are we here?

ERSNT: Because we got caught in a hail storm.

AXEL: No. I mean why are we here?

ERSNT: What do you mean then?

AXEL: It's occurred to me that we have no one to blame for our situation. In other words it's our own fault that we're stuck up here.

ERSNT: It was the weather. It was bad luck.

AXEL: That's true, it was a matter of falling in the right place at the right time. But I'm thinking that the problem is more of an underlying issue in our personality. I couldn't find solace in my family just like you with a working medical practice. We both thought it wasn't enough when it should've been. Maybe man wasn't meant to sail the sky. The saying goes, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it," right?

ERSNT: How does that have anything to do with us?

HANS: Tower of Babel. Man exceeded his reach, maybe we did too.

ERSNT: You think this is God's work?

HANS: Isn't it?

ERSNT: No.

HANS: And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent.

AXEL: Hans?

[Hans says nothing]

AXEL: Then why do you think that we are here then?

HANS: I don't know. We just are.

AXEL: It's because we were bored. Or needed a distraction I can't really tell. I couldn't stand to look in the eyes

of one more mother and tell her that I couldn't treat her child because she was broke and I was on the verge being so too. In the last month I have had four children brought in that had to be treated for frostbite. One of them lost two fingers. One family has been paying me by giving me bottles of milk every morning. Another oh has been cleaning my house. Everyone is suffering and we're broken. How 'bout you? I'm sure that you are here to forget that there are no one is in need of a lawyer nowadays. Who needs a lawyer when no one has a mark to their name? What will happen when your savings run out and your estate gets seized?

HANS: This depression will end soon enough. It can't last forever.

AXEL: Everyone down there is still going to be alive tomorrow. What about us?

ERSNT: Cheer up. It could be worse.

AXEL: How?

ERSNT: I don't know but things can always be worse than how they are, and that is something to be thankful for.

AXEL: Ernst shut up. You've always been one to talk too much. You were right. It was manners. No one said anything because you cry too easy.

ERNST: That's not true.

AXEL: Remember all those years ago in high school? When you got back a paper that you thought was fantastic and you got a 'D'.

ERNST: Shut up.

AXEL: And that time when you made that joke about Peter being too direct. Then you got offended when he said that you couldn't take criticism of any kind.

ERNST: No one likes being told their flaws to their face.

AXEL: How else would one improve oneself? Besides, you always take it too personally. It's as if you think it's an attack on you as a person.

ERSNT: I said shut up!

AXEL: What? Now you want the manners?

ERNST: You've always been a pompous prick.

AXEL: And you've always been an incessant self-indulged asshole.

[Gerd re-enters from above and looks around.]

GERD: Lovey weathzer? [*He looks blissful. All look at him confused. His speech is slurred*]

[*To Hans*] Hello.

HANS: Hello?

GERD: [*To Peter*] Hello. Hellllooo!

HANS: He's dead, Gerd.

GERD: Hav-we met?

HANS: Yes. We've met, Gerd. ...Long ago. We met in Switzerland. We were staying the same lodge in Zermatt and met at the base of the Matterhorn. We talked about climbing it together one day.

GERD: Hmmm?

HANS: Nothing.

GERD: I'm Gerd for nothing?

HANS: 'Gerd' not 'good.'

GERD: What's a 'Gerd'?

HANS: It's your name.

GERD: So you mean bifor now?

HANS: What?

GERD: You're saying we've met bifer niouw?

HANS: What's 'niouw?'

GERD: The present.

HANS: Yes, we met before now.

AXEL: Gerd. Run in place.

[Gerd begins flailing his legs]

ERNST: He's going nowhere, we're all going nowhere.

AXEL: It's to warm him up. He's getting too cold.

ERSNT: We're all getting too cold.

[Gerd has stopped flailing and begins to take off his boots. He struggles with his frozen fingers and eventually kicks one off with the other foot.]

AXEL: What are you doing?

GERD: Gittin' ready fa bed.

AXEL: What? We're not...

GERD: Doyou normally sleep wiz your bootson?

AXEL: No, I don't ...

GERD: I know zat some people like to wear woo socks to bed to keep zeir feet warm but I think that an extra sheet does just az well.

AXEL: Stop!

GERD: Why are you yelling?

AXEL: You are in a great storm. Can you not feel the thousands of hail blitzing you?

GERD: I wake again. Iz thiz a dream?

AXEL: No. If you go to sleep you may never wake up again.

HANS: Sleep precedes life.

ERNST: He's gone crazy hasn't he?

HANS: You remember Peter don't you?

ERSNT: Yes.

[Gerd slumps over and remains motionless]

AXEL: Ernst?

ERNST: Yes.

AXEL: I have something to say, something that I have never told anyone before.

ERNST: Don't.

AXEL: I must. I've done a lot of things in my life that I'm not proud of. I told you that mothers and fathers have paid me with things other than money. Well about six months ago I was approached by one who... offered me other ... 'things' for her medicine.

ERNST: You're a married man, Axel.

AXEL: I know. She just came onto me and I didn't even think about what I did 'till afterwards. I've never told my wife.

ERNST: But she knows?

AXEL: No, but I think she has her suspicions.

ERNST: I'm sorry, Axel. Now's not the time for it I suppose but then again I can't imagine when else I'll have the time to tell someone. I have a drinking problem.

AXEL: You're an alcoholic? I've never noticed.

ERNST: It's not that kind of problem. Three years ago I discovered that I get short tempered when I drink a bit too much. Adalia was yelling at me about something, I forget what, and I struck her.

AXEL: More than once?

ERNST: No, thank God. I begged and begged for her forgiveness but every time I drink at a party I think about what I can become if I'm not too careful.

[A pause where they think about what was said]

AXEL: I'm next. I can feel it. I feel warm all over.

HANS: I feeling warm too.

ERNST: Run in place. Like you told Gerd.

HANS: It's useless.

ERNST: No it's not.

AXEL: I'm sorry Ernst.

ERSNT: It's just like you to give up. Why are people so transparent?

AXEL: I'm naauught traanspaaaarant.

ERSNT: Yes. You are. You don't care about yourself, truly. You're a rich man. Rich people care about two things; getting money and keeping it.

HANS: It's okay, Ernst.

ERSNT: Everyone else is no different. The middle class in the middle spends their days wanting to be rich and the poor just don't want to be poor anymore, though their plights are more justified.

AXEL: Nuh-thiing canbe duun about it.

ERNST: No one cares about the individual anymore. Those who consider the idea, even for a moment, just throw it away. Why spend time bettering one's self when that time could be used to make a few more dollars.

HANS: Ev-ruy thing willbe alllll-right.

ERNST: It's a matter of 'next;' the next paycheck, the next vacation, the next rush. You're actions no longer hold any meaning to you and can't even live here with me. Don't throw this life away. Don't ignore the present.

[Long Beat where Ernst looks on with hope at the other two, eventually, both Hans and Axel stop shivering and look over to each other. As they speak Ernst looks solemn]

HANS: Hello.

AXEL: Hello.

HANS: Nice ta meet you.

AXEL: Iz a pleazure to make your acquaintance.

HANS: No no the pleasure iz allmine.

AXEL: I insist. Shake my hand.

HANS: If that I could.

AXEL: I see. You're too good to show me the rezpect that the most base of men show ich'other.

HANS: Not at all.

AXEL: Then prove it. [*Axel tries to reach out for Hans but can't reach him*] Ah, I understand. Please 'cept my sunserest apologees[a soft 'g'].

HANS: No apologize necessary. Did I catch your name?

AXEL: No, how wude of me. My name iz ... What iz my name?

HANS: Who cares?

AXEL: You do. Right?

HANS: Dat's right. I forgot. Zey're a bit inconsequensul at times.

AXEL: A name is a name is a name.

HANS: Well I'm Rolf.

AXEL: That's a nice name; strong and regal.

HANS: Thank you. It's been in the family for generations, ever since the first Reich my father's told me.

AXEL: Oh that's marvelouz I wiz I had a name like that.

HANS: Then iz yourz.

AXEL: Well then what will we call you?

HANS: Call me Ishmael.

AXEL: Waz that from?

HANS: Waz what from?

AXEL: That name?

HANS: Ishmael?

AXEL: Yes. It's from a book isnzint it?

HANS: Well how was I supposed to know that I was referencing a book?

AXEL: Iz okay. Well it waz nice meeting you. I've got to go.
[*He slumps over*]

HANS: Goodbye.

ERNST: I'm scared.

HANS: Who are you talking to?

ERSNT: I've got good reason to be frightened.

HANS: [*To AXEL's body*] Who is he talking to?

ERSNT: What I would give for a draught of vintage. I could then face death unafraid. But, then again, if I drink for the sensation then what is the difference between my body and the drink itself. Nothing, I suppose. My being would be inseparable from the drink. I must find my own strength. If it took liquor for me to find the courage then really it is not courage at all. It is a false reality, a borrowed reality, and what is there to gain from it. I would be cheating. Is it unreasonable to fight against such a torment if a path exists? Perhaps, then actions would be in vain and I would gain nothing. I've lost something important not so long ago. And for a while I wondered what it that I lost. Eventually, I just gave up and surrendered to my fate. For a long time, I thought

that it was my faith that disappeared into the ether,
though that never felt right, either. Was it my strength?
Was it my will? Was it my character? Is it lost forever?
Or can it be recovered? I ask these questions, but
somehow I am certain that I'll never find an answer.

[BLACKOUT]