

WARNING: Satire piece - cjk

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PREST: Don't fret, Eric and Ilsa. Help is coming

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We are all blessed to live in a beautiful, privileged part of the world, but every once in a while comes a reminder that even here there are less fortunate souls.

This story was first brought to the world's attention by our venerable national newspaper, the Globe and Mail. In a recent edition of their regular Financial Facelift feature, the Globe introduced us to Eric and Ilsa, a married Vancouver couple looking for financial help.

It's a story nearly all of us can relate to in these tough times. Here are some key facts, as presented by the Globe:

Eric is a 41-year-old doctor and Ilsa a 39-year-old dentist currently on maternity leave. They have five children who all attend private school. Eric "chooses to work for less money than he could," so they typically only bring in \$450,000 per year.

With Ilsa on maternity leave, however, that yearly sum drops even further, all the way down to \$360,000. Eric makes \$200,000 per year working in a medical clinic but his real passion is teaching, a noble calling he pursues, bottom line be damned. He only makes \$100,000 per year teaching one day a week at a university.

Eric and Ilsa bought a \$1.1-million plot of land but no matter how hard they crunch the numbers they can't come up with the money for the modest \$1-million house they hope to build for the family and their live-in nanny.

"Two professionals should be able to afford a modest house, but we can't get the numbers to work and would appreciate some help," Eric laments. Meanwhile, they're stuck living rent-free in a house loaned to them by a relative. But the clock is ticking. The wolf is at the door, and his name is Hardship.

That this is happening anywhere in the world is scary, but the fact that it's in our own backyard is what's truly chilling. The good news is that there's still time to help. If we act fast enough, we may just save a young life or two from facing a truly horrible fate like starvation or the public school system.

Step 1 is simple — these guys need a home. Can somebody get Habitat for Humanity on the phone? We're going to need a lot of volunteers — those Italian marble countertops won't install themselves.

As a nice little gesture we could also add a separate room in the house and stock it full of hot lunch supplies so that even when things are at their most dire, the family will always have something warm in their bellies during those cold Vancouver winters. We can call it the "soup kitchen."

Does anyone know a volunteer chef who can tell the difference between lobster and crab bisque?

Speaking of food, Step 2 will be ensuring that these guys always start the day with something in their stomachs.

Private school is tough, but it's even worse with a sub-standard breakfast like crepes suzette.

Obviously the food bank has a lot of quail's eggs just lying around but maybe we could convince them to cook them up into omelettes every morning and deliver them to the family with some caviar. Beluga caviar, if possible. Definitely not sevruga caviar — haven't they suffered enough?

Step 3: cash. Lots of it. Ilsa the dentist must know more than anyone that five children have a lot of teeth. And these little troopers shouldn't have to settle for anything less than \$1,000 bills from the tooth fairy.

Funds could be raised just like in that scene from *It's A Wonderful Life* where the whole town shows up to share what little savings they have. As Clarence the angel says, no man is a failure who has friends. And a live-in nanny.

That's enough about these crazy kids, though — they're just a couple of hard-working parents trying to turn silver spoons into gold.

The really inspirational story here is about the people who brought this to light, the truth-seekers at the *Globe and Mail*. Any old newspaper can report on hunger and homelessness.

This week every two-bit rag in the world wrote about an Oxfam report that claimed by next year the richest one per cent of people globally will own more than half of the world's wealth. That's a fun and easy story to tell. It takes a truly unique publication, however, to dig deeper and expose the suffering of the lower upper upper class.

I can't wait to see whom they profile next. How about a down-on-his-luck musician from Toronto named Drake (last name omitted to protect his identity) whose private jet somehow only has regular-definition TVs? Who could live such a life? #YOLO.

This whole travesty is a powerful reminder that there are people out there who are truly in need of help. We can all remember to give a little bit to those in need, to donate goods or money to worthwhile causes.

Heck, maybe this will push us all to even go out and volunteer a bit of our time at a local charity. I'm sure they'd be thrilled to see us.

If you do go, tell 'em Eric and Ilsa sent you.

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