

My Barrel of Sauerkraut

— April 3, 2026 —

In thick clothes, heavy shoes, a large barrel of sauerkraut on his back, he comes down to the shore with heavy steps. He wants to get to an island far out there; you cannot see it from here. He wants to learn to swim, he has heard that this is how you get to the island. He meets a swimming master, demands that he teach him to swim, and wants to know what it is going to cost.

And why do you want to go to the island?

I have heard that happiness is there.

I see.

Yes, release from all this heaviness here.

In any case you have to be able to swim to get to the island.

Right, so teach me. And what does it cost? Can I have it by this afternoon? I haven't got much time.

Hmmm... Let us begin at the beginning. Everything else comes later.

First set your barrel of sauerkraut aside, you can't take it with you. Your clothes too, your heavy shoes, put all of it down. Get yourself free of all that stuff, so you can move, so you become light.

But... I can't do that.

Why not?

All of it matters to me. I need it to live. It belongs to me. It is my life. It is me!

Is that so?

Well, I want to get to the island with all of it. So I have to learn to swim with all of it.

On the island there are other things, other things to eat as well. Your sauerkraut isn't all that special. And those heavy, thick clothes, you don't need them, and your shoes least of all. On the island it is different.

What do you know about what I need! I need my clothes for protection. I need my shoes to walk safely on the stony paths here. And I need my sauerkraut. I have to eat, after all. I am used to the sauerkraut and it does me good.

Hmmm... and which island exactly do you want to go to? Why do you think that happiness is there, that release is there? What would that even be?

In any case, from here you reach only the first island. From there you sometimes see, when the mists lift, the next island. From there...

I don't like any of this at all. I think you have no idea. I'll go on, I'll find myself another swimming master.

Translated from the German with the help of an AI system; the German version is the original.