

## A somewhat different chat

with Vic P. Victory

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We wade across a gurgling creek. Another one. Actually, it's a torrent under which freshly-laid cobble stones are freezing. Past shopping centers, bakeries and porn shops. Our shoes and pant legs are soaked with rain water and muddied. We hang on to our umbrellas and strain to see through the cloudburst and gusting wind. We don't know the venue to which Vic has invited us for the interview, but it is supposed to be next to the main railroad station. A hole which, according to Vic, has hardly any customers, is dark, smoky and therefore good for an interview. Vic dislikes masses of people. Generally, he avoids commercial establishments.

As we arrive in front of the premises after more than twenty minutes, my colleague and I wordlessly shake our heads. The door handles make us regret not having brought hygienic tissues with us. A heavy, burgundy-colored, ancient, stinking curtain covered with singe marks from cigarette burns, separates the entrance from the interior. Five tables decorated with cigarette-butt-filled ashtrays and sticky beer coasters. A short counter with four bar stools. A drunk, his head on the table, in the back of the bar. Wisps of stale smoke drifted around us. A heavily worn, deep-pile carpet in which probably thousands of species of bugs celebrated Thanksgiving because fresh meat had just entered the room. Someone alive stared at us from the corner of the room, but it wasn't Vic, that would have amazed us. It was the bar keeper who gave us an unfriendly nod, moving his cigarette up and down with his tongue. At once we felt uneasy.

After we had picked a table and glued ourselves to the torn leather-covered bench, we waited. Ten minutes passed. My colleague is still staring in disgust at the transparent soup

in front of him, which the bar keeper called cappuccino, while I regret once more my obsession with drumming my fingers impatiently on the table. Surely I will have to die now; of lice fever or typhus. Just as I am about to vomit, the door opens. Dripping from the rain and fifteen minutes late, Vic throws his flat cap onto the table, rids himself of his wet coat and takes a seat opposite us. He pulls at his suspenders as if to check their elasticity and stares at us mischievously. "Shitty weather, have you already ordered me a whisky?"

"It's only ten in the morning."

Vic threw me a pitiful look. "So?"

I ignore him. I know this game. While my colleague hands me the notes with the interview questions, Vic puts his right foot up onto the bench. "Is that bird shit on my shoe?"

I look at his dark brown Oxfords and shake my head. "No, that's a pickle."

Nothing more needs to be said: Vic loves pickles. I clear my throat and throw my head left and right like a boxer before the fight. "Can we start?"

Vic yawns and fidgets with a hole in the bench. "What with?"

I ignore that. I know this game. So I just start the interview, "Thanks for actually making it today. It's only the third attempt. What was so important last Friday that you had to stand us up? Invasion from Mars? Meteorite shower? Taking over the world?"

Vic seems to enjoy my annoyance and retorts, "You're going to have a heart attack if you get worked up over every little thing. Let me think ... no idea where I was. Maybe in the studio? Some song texts popped into my head and I quickly wanted to try out something. At least I think so."

"If to try out means throwing guitars at the wall and whisky over the mixing console, then it was Wednesday, not Friday. Guess who received a nice letter from a lawyer claiming damages? Anyway, leave the music to me. You can't even find the light switch in the studio."

"You don't have to be insulting."

"And you could keep our appointments."

Vic rolls his eyes and sighs. "So far it has been quite amusing. You know I hate these things. What are they good for?"

I flush with anger, close my eyes and say as calmly as I can, "For the last time. Interviews are important if you ...." Vic's victoriously smirking face makes me hesitate. In a higher pitch I continue, "Is there really no one who can pull you out from behind your infantile cover?"

Acting deliberating, Vic places index finger and thumb on his chin. "Jimmy Fallon. Or Ellen DeGeneres. Or the guy who cruises around in his car all the time. What's his name? Oh yes, James Corden."

"So, no-one ever."

"Correct."

"Then I'm touched that I can talk to you today. Vic, many writers use past mental anguish, bad experiences in childhood, a stroke of fate or an abyss of despair, like a drug addiction from which they have freed themselves, as a springboard to start writing, why they write. Why do you write?"

Vic turns up his nose, swirls his coffee cup as if there was really whisky in it and yawns, "My dad wasn't Ivan the Terrible, or my mother a callous serial killer, or my aunt a mean bitch, my granddad didn't knock anyone off and ...."

I had to interrupt Vic. I didn't want to talk about mass murderers or monsters. "Vic, I actually wanted to know whether you, like other colleagues of yours, started writing based on some loss or bad experience in the past. Whether you work through some of your past in your work?"

"This is exactly why I don't give interviews. Shit, my past belongs only to me. I don't want to hash it over, nor do I want to publish it. Otherwise my past would be like a printed present. My head vomits up ideas at minute intervals. They have nothing to do with my life. In addition, I don't belong to the traditional circle of authors. I'm more like a word junkie. What must come out, must come out. And sometime in the past, some dude suggested that I should publish my drivel."

The 'dude' was me and now I am his manager. I regret it daily. Before I could say anything, Vic continues, "Writing is a satisfaction for me. Others roll in bed in a fivesome, touching themselves ...." Because I know where this is going and I interrupt him, "Enough information! You are unteachable."

"And you ask the wrong questions."

"As far as you are concerned, is there such a thing as a right question? Forget it. You've decided to publish your novels on Amazon. Why?"

"Why not?"

"You're aware that this interview will be published on your website, right? And believe me, I will use every word."

"I see ... an eye for an eye. Hey, you should know why I'm not fit for interviews. I don't want to scare people with my person but rather entertain them with my books. I'm neither an attention whore nor am I a big shot ready to be commercialized."

"How do you see yourself then? As a hermit?"

"Very funny, I just like to have my peace. All I need is a sheet of paper, good music, and a bottle of whisky. And I don't mean a very expensive, four-hundred-year-old senile spirit, which corrodes the gullet when swallowed. It must have a flavor. The Hong Tong whisky from Thailand for example. Light, tasty, affordable and ..."

"Vic!"

"Okay, okay. How I see myself? As somebody, who stands for fairness, despises sweet-talkers who then spread rumors behind your back, not knowing what damage they cause. As somebody who can't grasp how cruel some people can be. Look at the internet! It is full of cowards who, protected by anonymity, vent their frustrations on other people. And you ask why I don't take part in this media craze? Why I protect my private life so meticulously? Yes, I participate – on your recommendation – on social platforms, but I live and let live, judge nobody, don't participate in witch hunts and simply try to reveal what's important to me. Satisfied?"

"Wow, I'm rather impressed. So many consecutive sentences almost free of cynicism from your mouth ... change of subject. How much money do you spend per book on editing and other services, like graphics, moviemakers, and so on?"

"Several thousand Euros."

"Is it worth it?"

"You, as my manager, should hope so."

Touché!

"How many books have you written so far and what can we expect next?"

"Shit, you know all this! Okay, okay, sorry. A few have been completed and are online. Some are almost done. Few are at various stages and no project of mine not at all."

"Tell me, do you enjoy it?"

"Writing books?"

"Driving me crazy with your answers."

"That too. Oh well. The Bridesmaid is followed by a crime novel. Then a sequel to The Bridesmaid. After that a love story. Something like in that order. The manuscripts are mostly complete and are in for editing and should be ready for publishing soon."

"That means in 2020 you'll be firing on all cylinders?"

"Have to. It's written into our contract."

I roll my eyes, that wasn't correct.

"How old are you? Twelve?"

"You know how old I am."

"Christ, Vic! You know this interview is for your fans, right?"

"Sick, I've got fans? Then listen up! I'm younger than the guy opposite me. Much younger. Decades younger. I even think all those out there are much younger than ...."

What made me ask that question?

"Vic, for God's sake pull yourself together! Now ... what else are you planning?"

"Well, I guess selling some fan merchandise."

I sigh and whisper hardly noticeably, "Why are you continuously avoiding my questions and doing this to me?"

"Because you're asking the wrong questions and I love your face when you blush. Your left eye has a twitch, by the way. I'd see a doctor about that."

"Would you like to tell us something which at least would make you seem a little likeable?"

Vic leans forward, clasps his hands on the bacteria-infected table and looks me straight in the eye. It's somehow weird, because suddenly his childish grin is replaced by an adult expression. And, indeed, I hear the words of a grown up. "I love food, sleep little and work a lot. I dig hats, sunglasses, suspenders and shirts, but don't consider myself a dandy. I hate fast cars, find old people fantastic, despise rumors and gossip, I'm very inquisitive, I cannot sit still for long and often rack my brain with stupid banalities. I hate know-it-alls, despise scandalmongers even more and often wonder why there is no German word for 'no longer thirsty'. Well, now there's a made-up word for it, but, seriously, whoever's heard of it? My weakness for whisky I got from you. My weakness for cigars I got from my great granddad, my love for music from my granddad. I like cooking and traveling, but enjoy neither long road trips nor flying nor squid. The invention of the dishwasher should be honored with a Nobel prize. Likewise the invention of the camera. I pick up slugs from the cycle path and put them in the grass. As a child I thought grandma's name was 'Gramma' and was astounded to find out that she had a real name. I love the smell of petrol, drink too much coffee, and hate appointments. I feed on discovering the world and I am thankful for what I can do."

Surprised by Vic's sudden fit of humanity, my mouth hangs open. My colleague, who is recording the interview is irritated. "I'm at a loss for words and we should stop right here."

"Shouldn't I talk about my books?"

"You'll find everything on your website, under the neighboring menu item."

Touché!