

Chapter 15

"The Mountain" Saga — Episode 3
Antenna XXL

Confirmed! I hate the mountains!

Pierre Dac — The schmilblick: good for nothing, but it might always come in handy.

Osvaldo Cavandoli — *La Linea* — Sometimes a single little line says it all.

3 days later...

The mountains: calm, beautiful, wild...

So they say? No idea! Me, I hate the mountains!

When I get back from work, I risk my life with every step, so I try not to skid on the icy road. When I look up from the ground, there he is, proud as Punch, perched on the roof of the *drak-car*, welding, halfway between MacGyver and an 8-year-old playing soldiers in a giant's body. I look up at him, low-angle shot:

Me — What are you doing?

Him — AN ANTENNA!!

Me — What for?

Him — To talk to the whole world, from Alaska to North Korea.

Me — Mars too, while you're at it?

Him — To everyone in the world who's got an antenna, like me!

Here we go again! Another absurd invention from *Vik the King* and his brilliant ideas. He's livid with me, because he can't stand me putting up with everything without a murmur. And frankly, he's right!

Unpaid overtime, late wages, irregular hours, cleaning up building sites, working on my days off: it's taking the mickey. But the worst of it is, with no money in the bank, I've no choice. I hang on until payday, like every seasonal worker. The boss knows it and plays on it.

Except he's reckoned without the Viking, who builds his megalomaniac phallus for revenge: a whopping 20-metre thing, a giant antenna planted 50 metres from the hotel, just to ruin the view for the guests on the terrace in their holiday snaps. From the valley, it looks like a military base hidden in the forest, ready to attack.

While Mister Viking picks up cosmic signals with his year-3000 satellite dish, I'm stuck in the *drak-car* with Big Dog. Together, we philosophise about the precarious future of the situation. Any minute now the police will turn up, tipped off by Interpol.

Me — Looks like he's doing everything to get me fired and out of here as fast as possible.

Big Dog gives me a sympathetic look — Bet on it! Expect anything... and above all... the worst!

Sunday Is Showtime!

The journalist — He played his joker... ever so discreetly?

The author — Yes. He's acting out a bad remake of *Back to the Future*. He projects onto me his war that he never settled. In the role of *Narcissus the First, the Flawless*: my boss, who humiliates him. In the role of *the Lady of the Fjords*: me, holding him back when he wants to leave. And in the role of *Eeyore*: him, alone and abandoned by all.

The Viking — What rubbish!

The author — You said it! Result: I'm still the one sleeping outside at minus 6, night after night, and getting it full in the face without asking for anything. Lemon juice in the eye already stung on the train, but this time he's aiming for both eyes. I'll end up wearing safety goggles, even at night! Stuck between an abusive boss and a controlling Viking, I'm replaying the rear-view mirror remake, level 2, upgraded version. Well... on the surface. Because scratch a little, and he's not the only one following an old script.

Me too, I've slipped back into my role: I keep quiet, grit my teeth, swallow it, play for time. Like with my parents when they raised their voices at the table. What we have in common: we're both nostalgic for old scratched records. We reveal each other, as the medium would say. Isn't life grand? And then we wonder why we put on weight. Well, there you go: to keep the bond, get paid, keep your man and incidentally your job. Or, depending on how you look at it, to keep your dependence going.

And while you're at it, the full set: emotional, material and financial! Long story short, we lose the plot.

The Viking — Speak for yourself. Instead of leaving to protect yourself, what's wrong with you?

The author — Leave, to depend on you? Between two dependences, I'd rather stay and get paid. Then leave in peace.

The Viking — Charming. You're holding me hostage, forcing me to stay stuck here! You don't love me. Come away with me, I'll help you.

The author — Help me? You're joking! By kicking me out at minus 6? Great, your Viking cure! Deciding for me. Not by the homeopathic drop, by the horse pill! Hang on, who's holding who hostage? You'd rather splash out on 20 metres of scrap metal to get back at my boss than leave straight away and front me a room, just till I get paid? My independence is worth less than your old humiliation? You're not short of cash, you're short of perspective.

The journalist — True, your XXL revenge did deserve an antenna!

The Viking — The antenna's different! It connects me to the whole world!

The author — Sure, that's it. And meanwhile... the antenna climbs, the tension rises and that lovely orgasm is about to explode!

The Hammock and the Hummingbirds

A novel by Karine Baridon



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