

Chapter 22

Teeny Weeny the Worm and the
Little Button

Not suitable for children... unless you're making some.

Alexandre Astier — Kaamelott

But what am I going to do without my almond paste?!¹

¹ Alexandre Astier, Kaamelott, the almond paste (AlloCiné, Facebook, in French).
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God said “*share everything out*”. Nature did the sharing, as Coluche² says! Manhood is like coffee: some are full-bodied, some are decaf.

And let's call a spade a spade... with his Nordic roots, battling rain, wind and snow on his great tundra, generation after generation, the Viking adapted. He held out! He became this muscle-bound giant who can take on the sea.

So, out of survival instinct, he ended up reducing his windage and now his willy's gone all teeny-weeny. Well, yes! He's tucked it away, compacted it, folded it up so it won't catch cold. Pocket igloo edition. And me, if I do this road trip all the way to the *Nord Ultima*, I'll get frostbite on my rump, and that's the cold, hard truth. Frozen, even! Deep-frozen!

So what's left for me, by way of compensation³, at minus 30°? His Big Dog, moulting, as an electric blanket? And to think I've even run out of almond butter... What am I going to do without my almond butter? Because it's not his *tirt*⁴, his trembling little bit, that's going to impress me.

I've already got my own little shield of pleasure. No need to go freezing my buns off in the Far North to play with my sacred little jewel. So when he declares, grandly:

Him — I'm not extravagant, I'm demonstrative. There's a difference.

Me — Yes, just a touch overzealous, maybe?

² Coluche (YouTube, in French).

³ Alexandre Astier, Kaamelott, the almond paste (AlloCiné, Facebook, in French).

⁴ Tirt : his trembling little bit

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Him — Are you jealous?

Me — No, you're faithful. I trust you, my love!

I think — Takes one to know one!

Some are discreet and well hung, others have fully loaded XXL *drak-cars* to compensate. But I can't tell him that. It's not nice.

And anyway, size isn't everything, even if it can help. What counts is knowing how to use it, mastering the foreplay and knowing how to go into extra time.

If only he knew... in my youth, yes, so yesterday, I knew a competition-grade *helicopter tirt* that sang "*Here we go, here we go, here we go!*" at all hours. The night before an opening night, match nights, party days, the mornings after a tour: good for recovery. KO days to sleep well, blue days for comfort and, of course, whenever the chance came up to kiss and make up under the duvet.

Basically, every day, to stay in shape, a healthy-lifestyle thing! It's like water: you have to drink several times a day to stay hydrated. So it's not his little magic wand, "Teeny Weeny" the worm, that's going to make me jealous. But I can't tell him that. It'd hurt his feelings, poor thing.

Besides, it's not his fault he doesn't measure up. He's just not in the same league, that's all. Let's be realistic. One plays amateur, the other plays pro and is already 3 times his size at rest, so imagine on the bench press!... And the volunteer fireman is tireless too. He's drilled so hard he can answer the call several times a day, day or night: impromptu festival, performance, encore, standing

ovation... the after-party, after the show, it never stops and it's back on live the morning after!

No, the little giant doesn't stand a chance. He can't go the distance. You put him to bed, he gives it his all and nods off straight away. Let's be honest! When you've got a series that keeps you on the edge of your seat, you can't wait for the next episode, just to know what happens. You skip the short film, far too short! No time to feel the character's whole psychology, the range of his positions, the subtlety of his feelings... The ending leaves you unsatisfied. Even with a good climax, it falls flat.

The jackhammer worm, two pats on the bum and lights out: fine for five minutes, but it doesn't float my boat! So even if I've got a body built for mischief, I'd rather read a good book with earplugs in, so I can't hear him snore, otherwise I lie there stewing. Oh well, you can't have it all! And there was me thinking it was proportional to size! Well, no! Wrong on all counts!... So when he tells me:

Him — I'm very faithful, I've never cheated on my wife...

True, and I can see why! He's not equipped for it, poor thing. Lucky for him, he's only a character in a novel who'll never read what I've written, otherwise I'd tell him: *"Sorry, don't take it personally. As Mum says, not everything you read is true. Don't take it all literally. Time to reconnect the neurons and remember I'm talking about a fictional character. Otherwise I'll be accused of emasculating men and that's years of therapy... Or lawsuits."*

Anyway, the fact remains that while I was giving symphony concerts, the little one was still practising his scales. And truth be told, that's not what gets on my

nerves. Actually, I think lying to others is bad enough. But lying to himself is worse! It's true! If I were him, I'd rather say:

Him — *I'm very faithful, I've never been caught!*

Subtle difference! Because he leads a double life. He's married to beer. And there, when it comes to fidelity, he's truly beyond reproach! No, really. He's got a gift for it! No beer can resist him. He pops her cap in two seconds flat. She froths up on the spot. Mind you, with all his training, he's become tireless. He's the heavyweight champion. 3 hours 33 into the bout and still in the ring. He hangs on, he staggers, but he stays on his feet without batting an eyelid. So when he says:

Him — *I've always loved my wife...*

True. He's very faithful to beer, and there at least he's believable! So he phones me every evening, that way he can drink with a clear conscience and sleep like a baby. Ah, if beers could talk... If I were him, I'd tell them to keep quiet. Just because I say nothing doesn't mean I think nothing. I may look naive, but I'm just being polite, that's all! Afterwards, I thought back to his grand speeches:

Him — I adore fidelity...

Me — Oh yes, especially mine! ... to abstinence! And his! ... to alcohol!

So when he tells me — I'm not excessive, I'm the full package.

Me — Oh, absolutely! Fully loaded, a full-blown alky. He's got the "full package" box set of the saga: *"Passions and Traumas"*, in 8 seasons. Hailed by the critics: *"Gripping, an emotional loop-the-loop. Fasten your seatbelts!"*

One day I told myself — I used to be naive! Now I know. You can't trust a man who's faithful to the bottle. You have to set boundaries, and that's what I did! I left (so there!). OK, fine, just after he dumped me. Maybe that's why I'm a tad miffed.

Since then, I've given up men with addictions. OK, fine, I've given up men, full stop. But it's not my fault! A truly faithful man does exist... but sightings are very rare.

Either he's already taken, or he lives in a fairy tale, a rom-com or a musical, same thing! And then people have a go at me for loving romantic comedies! Sorry, but I'll adore the next man who comes along, if he's that sexy and faithful! Where do I sign?

Mind you, like a sober addict or a well-balanced Viking, he's hard to find. But hey, I'm not giving up hope. I don't drink, I don't smoke, I don't make love either, come to think of it, I'm like Guinevere in Kaamelott:

— *"The facts of life? I sit on them. Figuratively speaking."*⁵

Excuse my French, but I've stopped getting scr... had! Really sorry if I'm being crude, but there are times you just have to let off steam! Don't worry, it'll pass. Because after all, in a "normal" relationship, it's "normal" to trust

⁵ Thank you, Alexandre Astier!

each other! Still worth a try, isn't it? That's it, decided: tomorrow, I'm on it!

And here I am. Tomorrow is today! Bliss! I'm faithful to myself and "never you mind" the ups and downs, I keep acting with confidence, even when I'm scared... er... especially when I'm scared, actually.

I admit it, I'm scared of losing my parents. Of ending up alone. An old maid. For a start, I hate the word, it makes me think of an old sock full of holes! So I stay faithful to myself and my darling will follow... Well, I hope so!

Me — Anne, sister Anne, do you see anyone coming?⁶

Sister Anne — Oh, I see all right: as long as you keep your nose in that book, there's little chance of your Prince Charming dropping out of the sky in front of your screen!

As Mum says — Get out there!

And as Dad says — Get cracking!

And as my sister says — Where's the fire? He'll turn up when you least expect it!

Me — Make your minds up! Fine, I'll improvise, as usual, and it'll be fine! *Mektoub!*

⁶ Charles Perrault, Blue Beard (The Blue Fairy Book, Wikisource).

Sunday Is Showtime!

The journalist — You're not exactly gentle with him.

The Viking — You emasculate men. That's why you're alone.

The author — Yes, in the end, our whole conversation sort of revolves around that, doesn't it? Saying the little things that embarrass us and that we think about every day. It's true that shrinking your *tirt* was absurd and uncalled-for. I deeply regret my clumsiness, which I'm not very proud of. I feel terribly ashamed (she says, smiling).

The Viking — That's because you're a frustrated, foul-mouthed old bag who's short on libido!

The author — Dream on! But it's fiction, so I say what I like. I'm nicer in real life, or more of a scaredy-cat! Or rather, maybe it's because I'm getting my own back with my pen for your sexist jokes, starting with that ridiculous nickname you saddled me with.

The Viking — That's because you're a *“stupid french woman”*.

The journalist — And what's hiding behind this fit of temper?

The author — Honestly? It's pathetic, but neither the Viking nor the competition-grade *tirt* stayed faithful to the pure love my poor broken heart gave them... wrongly, as it happens. So I'm a bit bitter about being left on my own, nursing my imaginary memories. Or maybe I was a

smidge put out that you dropped me after squeezing me dry like a lemon, just when I'd reached my limits...

The Viking — True, it can't always be easy being *Elinor Dashwood*⁷, the one everyone forgets.

The author — Maybe that's why I brought my violins: if I'm going to play the victim, I might as well do it to music. It soothes the savage breast. It's always had a calming effect on me.

The journalist — For example?

The author — *Fix You*⁸, Jacob Collier's version, live with Chris Martin. When I see those audiences, so moved, singing the chorus, they're the real stars! And maybe, in a way, the lyrics move me because I'd have loved the Viking to stand by me. Because love and sincere attention, even imperfect, are worth so much in times of distress.

The Viking — Now you've finished killing the mood and getting it all off your chest, any chance you've forgiven me?

The author — Oh, I did it for my own peace of mind, very selfish of me! And straight away I got back my cheerful skylark temperament, and my libido with it! (Well, I hope so.)

The Viking — That's what I love about you, as charming as ever. In your own slightly catastrophic way.

⁷ Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility* (Wikipedia, in French).

⁸ Jacob Collier, *Fix You* (YouTube).

The author — But tell me, honestly, what do you think of the novel? Did it move you?

The Viking — Seriously? I wonder how you manage to turn everyone against you in such a little book! It's very brave and bold... or rather reckless and foolhardy! Because you break all the rules, you know?

The author — How so?

The Viking — It's a chamber piece, entirely devoted to conflict, where everything happens in a *drak-car*, with two antiheroes. You tackle depressing subjects nobody cares about, except the suicidal. And to top it all, you even shrink my *tirt* to the size of spirulina. So you'd have to be blind to think it'll work! Apart from me suing you for insults carved in stone, I can't see it.

The author — And yet you said that with you as the hero, it would work!

The Viking — Exactly, I'm the only one who can save you. I really am your last chance!

The author — Hmm, obviously... But I'm curious, did you enjoy our time together?

The Viking — Well, to be honest, I don't remember a thing. Or only hazily, yes and no. It was very strange, as if I was stuck somewhere between your clumsy charm and your plain clumsiness. And in a way, both are true. You have this slightly awkward, slightly hesitant energy. But that's what makes you endearing... Shall I carry on with the act?

The author — Absolutely, go on, flatter me, I love it.

The Viking — More seriously, I'd like to understand what makes you think you know me so well? Better than I know myself, it seems? When you couldn't be further from the truth?

The author — Oh, as an author, it's not reality that interests me, it's fiction. So I keep exploring my writing, describing your paradoxes. I see you in 3D in my head and I simply let the ink flow. That's when the magic happens.

The Viking — Sorry to disappoint you, but our catastrophic adventure had no ill effect whatsoever on my happiness. You, on the other hand, are badly shaken, baby! That's because you think too much. Live! Time flies. But since you criticised my *tirt* in public, I don't know how far you'll go. So I'm warning you: if you wreck my career, let's just say The Axe won't let you off! I'll demand a war tribute for sullyng the af Haldorholm coat of arms, and you'll have to cough up!

The author — But you were saying the opposite 10 minutes ago! You won't do it, because that would mean admitting you recognise yourself! And I'd be surprised if you owned up! There we go! What's the catch? The return of *Mr Hyde*⁹!

The Viking — No, I never said any such thing!

The author — Who's this "Thing", so I can wipe him off your bloody nose? You've had threats from *the High Authority of the Peaks*, is that it? Has *the Tribunal of Viking Warriors* been on the phone? Tell me who it is!

⁹ Robert Louis Stevenson, *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (Wikipedia, in French).

The Viking — It's a figure of speech.

The author — So your word's worth nothing! Why? Does it annoy you that I wrote this novel?

The Viking — You know you're exhausting? Cut the drama! How do you expect to move forward if you keep looking back? Let go of the past, or it won't let go of you!

The author — That's rich, coming from you! With your sea monsters and your War of the Scorched Lands on a loop, you're like *TeleKata 24/24 7/7*! And I am moving forward, look: a book and a film!

The Viking — Oh yes, in your novel! But me, meanwhile, in real life, I've bought 1 house, done all the work on it, got 3 dogs. And who says I haven't remarried my ex-wife?

The author — 3 dogs and 1 wife, and in that order too! How flattering for her.

The Viking — So what, I own it! If you want to know what unconditional love is, get a dog! Women: love, terms and conditions apply!

The author — True, the cockerel looks down on the hens from the top of his dunghill. It takes a lot of plumage to make up for his mini *tirt*. You're throwing me overboard tied to an anvil, but don't you worry, the book's already out, you've already got fans, so poo to you!

The Viking — Now we're talking! Works every time! I love making you angry, it relaxes me. Actually, I had a lot of fun with your Viking. He's brilliant, I love him. And since I'm better in real life, I improved him by playing him.

The author — Oh, finally? Coming to your senses?

The Viking — I'm not letting you succeed on your own, when it's "Me" who's the key to your success!

The journalist — And what do you suggest to the reader?

The author — Show glorious lines from another angle*. But watch out all the same: never judge a Viking by his cover...

The Hammock and the Hummingbirds

A novel by Karine Baridon



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