



BOOMERANG EFFECT

CHAPTER 3

The entrance to the Temple

At the dawn of the fifties, it was indeed the beginning of electrification in the Perche countryside. Hey, yes! It is no more than fifty years since the good old oil lamps have disappeared from homes somewhat remote of the cities. I do not mean that this new market was the gold rush, but it did look a lot like that compared to the current situation. Everyone wanted to see clearly at night, and the business was flourishing for those who knew how to profit from it.

My father was not part of those ones. Perhaps due to lack of confidence, perhaps by simple honesty, perhaps due to too much reasoning, the fact remains that he had a lot of difficulties in claiming the just remuneration of his work. It is true that he was often confronted with people who considered themselves to be more unhappy than him and maybe he was too sensitive at this. Many small farmers were still living in a state of quasi autarchy at that time. Almost all of their food requirements were certainly covered by the resources of the farm, but their exchange capacity remained very low, and was accentuated by the need to keep some reserves to save them a bad harvest. This made the poorest people evolve in a life of miserable appearance. The majority of them, however, were much richer than my poor dad, but as after pulling a heavy trailer full of tools behind his bike, he had bought an old six horsepower Renault from many years pre-war, he was considered like making money easily. The materials and supplies was already extremely expensive to the purchase, then rather than doing sloppy work, he preferred to do it perfectly, even if he had to shorten the list of hours on the bills so as not to be considered a thief.

If things had remained there, my parents would have no doubt encountered only few problems, but just as many of their customers would have liked to have one's cake and eat it too, many would have wanted to have the electrical installation without having to pay it. Bills payments therefore were therefore dragging on for many months, when it was not over several years depending on the harvests. Between the unpaid and advances purchase of materials, they were thus always poor with a lot of money outside.

For us three, Colette, Jean Claude and I it was the dream this old car, Renault 6 horses of the years 1923 or 24. We called it "Titine". All three in the back seat, we were like little princes when we were going to our paternal grandparents in Châteaudun. It was as Luis Mariano was singing it "on the road of Narbonne, one could see the turns of Carcassonne, to be profiled at the horizon of Barbaira". Imagine, it was taking us no less than an hour to travel the small forty kilometers of straight lines that separated us from their home. Our joy was yet reaching its peak, when from the top of the last hill, we were suddenly discovering all the city and its proud feudal Castle.

We also had from this time, a few Sundays at the sea, Cabourg, Franceville and its fine sand. Me, I used to make sand pies, sand castles, I ran until I am gasping for breath on these vast expanses of beaches that the sea left with a few threads of water as it withdrew. Ah! To run, I ran, I thought of nothing else, especially to run faster than others.

There was already, as deeply rooted in me, this desire for races, for competitions, just as for the little bike in the store window of the bicycle shop several years earlier.

As early as 1953, dad installed a very high antenna, thirteen meters above the roof and we have had television. Needless to say you, that at the time it did not go unnoticed in our campaigns, especially as the receiver often was put in the store and caused then a crowd of onlookers. It surely wasn't the color television; the "snow" was often appearing to the screen. It must be said that there were not all the relays with which we are equipped now; we lived a hundred and fifty kilometers from Paris, and we were picking up the transmitter of the Eiffel Tower.

For me, who was then only seven years old, it was quite important to be the only one in class to watch "Thirty Six Candles", the "Piste to the stars" or the "Life of the Animals", but I do not believe that I drew a real pride to my classmates. If it had been, it seems to me that my school results would have been quickly enough to bring me back to Earth. I do not mean by this, that I was bad, but if my brother and my sister were always first, for me it happened to me occasionally.

We got along well all three, Colette, Jean Claude and me. We were certainly not model children, because, it is true we sometimes quarreled, but we loved each other very much. We could not bear that one of us had been frustrated compared to the other two and that often went to the smallest details. If one of us had received one candy without the others, we divided it in three. Do not worry, we were not angels, because there were many small slips, but the family atmosphere was good, the heart was there.

In the spiritual field, we weren't maybe the first, but just like at school, we were assiduous. We went all three regularly to catholic catechism, on the one hand because of proprieties, but also because on our arrival in this village, mom had somewhat reconciled herself with the religion, in the contact with the very nice priest of our village. He was a good man, sincere and true in everything he did, and I think we could have said about him, what we sometimes sing in our churches: "Jesus inside, sees himself outside. He had been able to see in my parents, young people who invested themselves to get their aim, but who did not however forsake the family life, finally young people that God had given eager to him to do something to help them. Shortly after their beginning of activity, he had thus confided to my parents a work of which I still remember myself. It was a luminous panel made up of a multitude of small light bulbs, at the effigy of Saint Apolline, a virgin who was celebrated on February 9th, the day of the village festival.

At the entrance of the Church's choir, facing a very impressive representation of the Virgin Mary holding Jesus in her arms, her statue was there, just as imposing, a pair of pincers in right hand. She was prayed by the faithful for dental healings and recognized "patroness of the village."

It must be said that at this time, we all had a huge need, but again we will come back about it.

By this small work, this nice priest had been able to apply charity, without hurting and as he had at one's disposal a very large garden for him alone, he had proposed to them the three quarters of it to my parents. This garden was overhanging from several meters over our very small inner courtyard and some dependencies, which allowed us direct access to it using ladders and wooden paths placed on the roofs.

Let me emphasize in passing, how much this kind man had had more discernment than others. Which shows that God blesses people humble of heart! In my parents, he had not seen the only deceptive appearances, but had known to differentiate between the external aspects that gave them their function in this small village of countryside and the reality of life which did not have really a connection. This is how even with toothache, this period belongs to a blessed time. It fits into what we could call for my parents, the progression. I believe that they had their best days behind themselves.

It was at this time that the big problem of the secondary education of their children began to arise for them. Our village was located fourteen kilometers from the first town, Nogent-le-Rotrou, where my sister could have entered boarder in class the sixth grade (or first year). It was not yet a question of school pickups at that time and as craftsmen could not claim to obtain scholarships, in front of the financial difficulty that this represented, the problem was postponed.

Around this same period, my parents not having the means afford to me an electric train, I began to build one in plywood. I drew my inspiration from a real treasure for the aspiring handyman that I was then, an imposing pile of old magazines "System D" placed at the bottom of the attic. If I quote this train, it is that it have been for me, it seems to me, my first major failure. Very quickly indeed, the realization fell into the water. I do not believe, moreover, that it lasted more than a few days, but it nonetheless taught me a lot.

While I am writing, I realize indeed that this experience often served me as an unconscious reference to evaluate my motivation in what I was going to undertake then. Very quickly, I evolved toward "shipbuilding" that motivated me much more. In order for my dreams to have a minimum of reality, it was absolutely necessary for these boats to be able to sail. A mock-up would have been for me a dead boat and I liked too much already to live, to lose myself in abstract dreams. No, it had require genuine something, that moves, that sails. Imagine a little, even to sleep gave me the impression of wasting time, of dying a little. I would have already wanted to be able to do everything, as well to sail on the world tour on my boats, as to build a doghouse for our dog "Zamba", with living room, WC, bathroom. I always needed occupations and when I had nothing to do, mom or Colette were never short of ideas for me. This is how I learned to sew, make pompoms, embroider, knit, to make cakes, to cook, but also to repair the flashlight or the irons of the customers. I established on small planks of small electrical installations like power outlets, lightings simple switch, to see even two-way switch. I had always something to discover.

At school, on the other hand, things were going soon to become bad for me. By the age of nine, I began to have great difficulties in spelling, which were going very soon become very big, then enormous difficulties in the following years.

If I think about it today, I think that the blockage that I was going to experience during this period, had its source in the image that I had then of my brother and my sister. They were both brains that I was not, especially Jean Claude. I was afraid it seemed to me, to disappoint my parents, not being up to the family, and to hide this insufficiency I was going to enter a infernal circle. Faced with so much incapacity, it seemed to me, my suffering becoming too great, my shame equally, my pride certainly just as much, I began to simulate the disease. I was just ten years old.

In the firsts times mom felt sorry for me and kept me in the morning at home. In the afternoon I was cured, I had avoided dictation!

I reviewed all the small sufferings, cough, sore throats or headache, but very quickly it was necessary to me to vary, so I had bellyache. That seemed easier to me to master. I was not so stupid, it seemed to me, my sister and my father had a certain brittleness of the liver, it was easy for me to inquire me somewhat about it, especially as I had already done natural sciences and knew well the position of the organs in the human body. I had therefore never any difficulty in deceiving this little woman, doctor of the village. From the first time she listened to my chest, then when she palpated the right side, I jumped emitting a big: Ouch! The trick was played!

I had no merit of comedian; I was and remain so ticklish that the jump was more than natural, only the sound was the simulation. She had seen absolutely nothing and the diagnosis had fallen, the one I had chosen, I had pain in the liver. I will not tell you all the medications that I was able then swallow so much they were many, nor diets that I was able to do. More the constraint was great, the more I easily overcame it and happy to do so. This was all grist for my mill, since I proved then my aspiration to healing. There was however only one thing that I could never do very well, it was to pass me of to live. I just told you, there are some lines, sleep or just be in bed, gave me a feeling to die more than a little. To compensate for my boredom, my parents bought me cardboard cuttings or many other such trivia of this kind, which were relatively expensive at that time. For them who began to experience some financial difficulties, they spent this way, a small fortune to distract me.

What selfishness could I have manifested thus towards my brother and my sister mainly! For how many of my sins Jesus gave His life, and it was only the beginning! How much shame, I have been able to inflict so to my poor mom, when, after she had made the relationship to the orthography and my "diseases", she had to trail me at the school on the three hundred meters that separated us from it? I was screaming then supplications, stronger than a person sentenced to death led to the scaffold, so that she did not took me away. My screams were such, that they was drew all a crowd of onlookers and the village gossips, who were going out on their doorstep with many comments.

The worst memory of this collapse, however, has been the day I have had to lower me to copy on one of my classmates. I say to lower myself, because for me it had then represented the height of the decay. Just the moment before, I had not known how to write "dans" ("in" in French). Whenever I was stopping short on a word, I had to act quickly so as not to lose the train of the dictation.

As usual, so I quickly inspected all solutions "d'en, dent, d'an, den, dan"... and, faced with the despair that overwhelmed me on the moment to the idea of the mockery of the teacher and the laughter of my classmates who did not fail to explode during the correction, I plunged into the mud of sin, the height of shame, I "COPIED". Do not believe that I exaggerate the thing; I then lived it so, on the moment.

I had trapped in an infernal spiral, because the "disease" having been somewhat discovered, I had to find something more extravagant to be more persuasive: I therefore went over to hallucinations. Arrived at this dimension, I felt however cornered in my last entrenchments.

The hand of God was fortunately there to calm the tears of mom about me, because a comfort was going to be brought to her. A sales representative, whose wife had been healed of a depression by an acupuncturist / osteopath, indicated to her, the address of this one. Nobody around us knew this kind of specialty then, but mom took however appointment and we went there. He made us come in, made me lie down remaining stood upright to look at me. Mom spoke to him, but he stayed there, as if he wasn't listening her. I understood at this moment that this one I will not deceive him, and his diagnosis fell: "Madam, your child never had pain to the liver". He certainly did not teach me anything, but I was somehow relieved.

I know since a little while however, that in this time of my life, I was probably in contact with hepatitis B, but during the greatest risk of skidding of my life, this contamination was so mixed with everything else, that no one had actually made this diagnosis. The enemy had almost closed his trap on me forever, as he closes it on each of us if we follow him in his tortuous ways.

I do not know if it was the two acupuncture sessions or the fact of not being able to back down that brought me healing, but when the day of spelling came back, I left to the school fully perky. I was apparently cured of my frauds. From one hundred to hundred and twenty faults in one page and a half of dictation, as I did in the most "glorious" moments, I went down quickly to half of this, then to the fifth, then to the tenth. After??? Oh! After... I often well do laugh my secretaries despite everything, when in my work I had to write many pages of detailed estimate.

During all this period, my "naval" experiences had made good progress. After a capricious "submarine", I was passed to the "steamboat". They were very basic, but gradually led me to the understanding of their weaknesses and especially to the dreams of tall sailboats.

In the maze of my occupations, there was one that I had somewhat forgotten, it was the help we brought to our parents on the building sites.

As astonishing as it may seem, I did not indeed say "my father", but "my parents." During the first years of their business, they had taken an apprentice to help dad, and then, the offer having quickly become too large, they had had to engage one, then two workers to meet the demand. A happy progression could have been considered, but the phenomenon of unpaid had grown in the same proportions, thereby multiplying the problems. It had then been necessary to settle what did not could wait, the wages, the loads, the taxes, the invoices...

The progression had lasted seven years and surcharges were going to fall. They were going to fall like the guillotine's cleaver, but at the speed to which the death knell sounds. It was going to take a long time to get down this cleaver, but whereas its movement was begun, impassively, it marked the beginning of a long agony.

Mom, who had not lost anything of her youthful fighting spirit, was going to invest herself during many years in the electrical or plumbing yards alongside Dad, to replace the worker who had become too expensive. Jean Claude and I also invested in the task. My brother being two years my elder, was also more effective, and just like mom, he rather made drillings of wall, embedding, fixing or other things of this kind. Me, often as a game, I put up the sockets and switches. Each one was doing what was at its level. Colette, who had received her first degree certificate, first one from the canton, followed courses by correspondence for her school certificate of secondary education, and at the same time received the customers at the store. Everyone put what he could to save the ship.

In another type of day-to-day activities, we also had a visit to the neighboring farm to stock up milk. According to the mood of the moment, it was either the nice walk, or the drudgery. Only one thing remained always equal however, it was the picking of the dandelions or cutting the rabbits grass, that, it was always boring no matter what the day. The gardening, was not either my cup of tea in the garden of the parents. In mine, which was not to exceed five to six square meters, it was

more fun and especially less tiring. In the fall, to protect the winter salads, we were also going to pick up dead leaves in the nearby woods. This noble task, however, was not going to remain for us a very glorious subject. It had quickly become for Jean-Claude and me, an occasion to fall. I must have been eleven, maybe twelve, well what: We were already men! As dad was smoking, we decided to smoke too. It was as fast as that to be undertaken, but much more difficult to stock up on cigarettes.

I told you a few lines ago, mom worked on the building sites with dad. As a result, when we were all three at home, we often served each our turn at the store. Of course, we needed to give customers their change, so when Thursday arrived, coin by coin, we were subtilizing in the till. It was necessary not to go too fast, because the till was never filled well and the foolishness would quickly have been discovered, but we were "persevering" in our deceit, we were often going back in the same day. Several times we did so, until the day when, I don't know which of the two, wanted to make a firework with the matchbox still almost full and he did grilled himself the eyebrows by the conflagration that it produced. We then plunged into a lie not possible, from the style of having found this matchbox still full. I think no one was ever really fooled, but our parents pretended to believe us, judging us sufficiently punished by ourselves, rather than aggravate the situation to the extreme.

In contrast to the fact that we lit up the matches, daddy was extinguishing the fire. Indeed, since our arrival in the village, he had become volunteer firefighter. From time to time, we were going attend at the training of the team on Sunday morning, but also sometimes, when we have grew up a little, we slipped into the car on departures toward chimney fires. That is how we witnessed a stormy night, at the devastation of whole farmhouse, which I keep a great notion of the danger that fire represents, without however fearing it.

Every year, as many associations do it, this firefighters association, organized some balls, and especially a small theatrical production, as schools for the award ceremony and the priest for Christmas. There were also the neighboring communal fairs, the agricultural shows and an important need for PA system had very quickly been felt. In addition to his various craft activities, dad had therefore seized this market opportunity and had built a complete sound equipment: Amplifier, speakers, microphones, connecting cables, record player, 78 rpm records,... etc. Around the years fifty-eight fifty-nine, he even had fitted with a PA system an orchestra that we followed each week-end. You think we like that above all else. We made ourselves useful in unwinding the cables, to get out from the car the heavy amplification equipment... We had to justify our presence. It is true that it was heavy this material, probably because our arms were not very strong, but also because everything was not miniaturized as now. In these circumstances, dad was also the presenter, us, we played with the children, but also in the evening, we danced at the sound of the accordion music. Sometimes when the atmosphere was good and the "oompah" lasted a little more than usual, we slept in the car or on a bench, especially me, the little last one. We were happy with all these outings that many others did not have and I do not want to say that for me, I did not fell a slight sense of superiority.

We were sometimes doubly happy when it happened us this windfall, when was arriving the final Waltz, our parents propose us this unexpected surprise to go directly on the Normandy coast to pick up cockles. These days, or more exactly these little mornings, I can ensure you that there was no loafer, to put away the all the PA system. On Sunday we were of course all fit, but on Monday, even if sometimes we had somewhat small eyes to go to class, nobody complained nor let it show through.

Once my spelling problems resolved, my schooling became again normal and without major problem. For Jean-Claude, it was even well since he had made an almost identical score to that of Colette, and had arrived second of the canton at his basic examination of primary education. Just like she for that matter, he was going to begin the correspondence courses at the beginning of the new school year following his examination.

Tomorrow is another day, me, I was only to my solemn communion.

I had not luck to do my retreat of communion with this good an sincere priest, of whom we have already talked a lot. He had been too direct with the bourgeois class of the village to be appreciated by all. This is how! It is often difficult to please everyone, for the one who wants to stay in the truth. He had then made the sad experience. I had, therefore, for my retreat of solemn

communion, a young abbot rather nice, led by a priest of small size, with a slender nose and scathing words. Fortunately, it was not a major concern for me. Indeed I made my communion with faith and truth before God and that was the main thing for me. I was certainly not disinterested by the traditional gifts, nor the meals and the family around us, but my best memory of that moment remains the sincerity with which I advanced toward the altar that day.

On the way, in the following year I continued to regularly attend Mass. If I could not go to that of half past ten, I was going to that of nine. Often even, I took my bike that never left me, except to put on my roller skates, and I was going to Mass in one of the neighboring villages. In one of them, a very old parish priest who was known for his kindness was yet officiating there. It is true that for the heart of a child, it is important to find in the man of God, the Love of Christ.

This year, I thus passed my spiritual life, one Sunday in a church, one Sunday in another, and just like Colette and Jean Claude had done it before me, and at my thirteen, I renewed my vows before God, which is the Catholic solemn communion.