



## **BOOMERANG EFFECT**

### **CHAPTER 4**

#### **The rout of my faith**

It is not by chance that I have entitled this chapter "The rout of my faith," but by comparison between my own life and the period of the War of 1940, commonly called the "the debacle or the rout" because of the stampede very confused without much resistance from the French army in front of the German army, then its capitulation before being made prisoner.

During this period of personal "rout", the enemy of our souls, the one whom the Bible also calls Satan or the devil, was going set up the net in which I will be trapped later. He was going to do this use the personal practice of my adolescence and use various anchor points of my childhood as moorings for this net. Seeing the game well engaged for him, he then began to rejoice of the traps that he had fomented, but it was without take into account of the immense Love of God, our Father, our Creator. God the Father, who gave His only begotten Son, so that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but has eternal life.

How I am eager to tell you about all these good things that we will see only later... This enemy, who had succeeded twenty five years earlier to push mom out of God's presence by the wound brought by a man, was going to use the same ploy for me. I had just made this renewal of solemn communion and I have no doubt now that the ceremony was very beautiful. However, I can tell you without regret that I have no memory of it. I could almost believe that this second public stand never existed.

I can assure you that I had however acted in a deep sincerity the first time, but perhaps a second time represented in the brain of the child that I was, a form of pantomime, a flashback.

As I write these lines, memory returns to me from this somewhat forgotten period, because I did indeed this renewal of solemn communion in May 1959 and remained then several months without returning to the church. At that time I had a school friend named Christian. He had no luck, because from birth he had such strabismus that he saw very little. He was a year older than me and although he was very kind, I did not spare him as much of my jokes of bad taste, like many of my little classmates. He was certainly a bit naive, but if I was making fun of him, I was just like the hospital that makes fun of the infirmity, having nothing to envy to him about naivety. One spring day of sixty, taken one and the other from a heart impulse toward God, we broached together this nice topic of the faith. Nostalgia of the past helping, for the "adults" that we thought we had become, we found ourselves quite naturally in front of the church, the "House of God", of which we found closed door. It seems to me that we knocked several times, knowing that it was always open and remained there for a long time conversing of God's works, hoping to the miracle it could open.

We were about to come down the great stone staircase, disappointed of our bad luck, when we saw coming to us this small priest with the slender nose about whom I spoke to you in the preceding chapter. I do not know if he looked less forbidding than the other days, but at the moment we only saw God in him. We were thrilled to see him climb the first steps in our direction. It was then a bit like if the Lord came Himself towards us.

It was obviously to mistake the Master for his servant, to mistake the one who is for the one who tends to become. I certainly do not remember the exact words he used to address us, but I have nevertheless the memory of the shower that I took then. Accompanied by a disdainful stare, he threw us some icy words of contempt, like, "What are you doing there, gang of rascals?" "Have you only made your Easter?"<sup>1</sup> He said no more and went on his path without even taking the time to listen to what we had to say to him. No doubt he would have then understood his mistake...

1) For the Catholic religion, to make your Easter is to confess at least to the priest and to communion on Easter day. (For the Jews: It is to respect all the rituals of Passover)

The charm had suddenly broken for us and had turned into a hot and cold shower. The wound had been fast but deep; it was going to take twenty-eight years to close.

Was he guiltier than others, this little man in the direction of which we had descended happily, without knowing what was awaiting us? Did he have a life worse than another? Was it not rather his shyness, his illness or his nap interrupted prematurely by two small cranks that we were? What do I know? Only God knows! May God forgive him his few small bad words that had so lashed us! Provided that I never speak more badly to children than this man did to me then that I was already no longer a child but a teenager.

Far from me indeed, the idea of holding him for in charge of all my mistakes! He had indubitably made a fault to a smaller than him, but if God used this in order to test my faith in Him, it is not to me to condemn the man that He used, even if his acts were not the best. Let us never forget the fifth commandment of God "Honor your father and your mother", because this man is one of my Fathers in the faith. It would indeed be an attempt to conceal my fault for having placed my trust in man, more than in God Himself. And then, let us not dramatize anything, because even if these circumstances were going to be the catalyst of my spiritual decadence, I did not stop however to live.

I can demonstrate it, because this "pair of slaps", represented much less for me, than the few days we spent with family on the wild coast near Quiberon that year. We did not certainly lived in a luxury palace, but with a borrowing tent, we had been camp on unauthorized sites and outside travel expenses, the expenses remained almost non-existent. It was however for us all unforgettable moments of escape and an inexhaustible source of memories. My parents especially had all the more to escape from daily worries, that health was not the most blooming. To all the expenses of my false diseases, each of us received some very expensive dental care and a state of depression for both, dad and Colette, had come to join it. At that time, the artisans and traders not benefit from the social security, it is thus useless to give you details that these problems caused to them.

In 1958, two years before the time we are talking about, my parents realizing that they controlled less and less well the situation had already been just about to cease any commercial activity. They had then made an appointment with the notary of the village to put all on sale, but this latter had known to convince them that the arrival of the General de Gaulle in power was going to put everything back on feet. Unable to discern the sources of their problem, they have been willing to believe in this, but they made then the second great error of their lives, the first being to have borrowed money from my maternal grandparents to settle.

We could see almost daily the fruit of this first error, so much this one had placed them under the yoke of my grandparents, which had never ceased to grow. As I told you in the very first pages, my grandmother's authoritarianism was almost sickly and in one way or another, she always managed to compel my parents to account for everything they did. If she did not succeed or if, as almost systematically, she had doubts, she questioned us insidiously putting on an innocent look. Very seldom we let the cat out of the bag when in advance, we had received instructions to say nothing of a small trip or a small superfluous. They were generally only banalities, but it was necessary for her, she had to run everything and everyone was at her disposal.

Since their arrival in this village, my parents had often been requisitioned by her, to lead her to pilgrimages or to lead her to see some "people". People who had powers of this, powers of that! The more she progressed in these ways; the more life became unbearable around her. She was angry at all her neighbors, she was accusing all her brothers and sisters of sorcery or other similar

things, even my grandfather could no longer more stand her, so much it was necessary she dominated over everything that could move. How much could she be tortured by all her fears to act so?

Around this period of the years fifty-eight, sixty, she assumed a permanent custody of two children, who had been placed by their mom at the public assistance. The small girl was two to three years old and the boy about four to five.

We had all seen for years the difference she had always made between boys and girls. Was it the suffering of the loss of her own son at the age of five years; was this...? What I know is how often it was horrible for us to see this grandmother, the one who was our mammy, as persisting in morally destroy this little boy. The maltreatment were leaving only few physical traces, it was of a much more pernicious kind. For example, she gave to the boy a square of chocolate and four to his little sister. If sketched then the slightest pout, all the chocolate was going to the girl, while he received the spanking to cure him of his jealousy. In the same kind was to share for example a piece of boiled beef with vegetables into two equal parts. The lean meat was going to the small sister, the fat for the boy and even if he had to have retches to each mouthful, he only came out of the table only after having eaten everything. Still in another kind, it was to swaddle him tight even in full summer and attach him in the bed so, supposedly, to prevent him from falling. When she reached these limits, mom lost patience and threatened to call in an inspector from the DASS (Direction of Sanitary and Social Affairs). Her wrongdoing then changed a bit, then the two little ones were taken over by the mother.

My goal is not to accuse him through these few lines. They only do emphasize the sadness of the human condition when it is lived only through a semblance of piety attached to a bad spirituality. That one even that the men impose themselves to be pleasant to God on days of worships, but which never changes hearts. I think, moreover, that the moral suffering of the small boy was only equaled by that of this poor woman lived at the death of her beloved baby. How badly did she had herself suffered to arrive at such errors of behavior!

I must recognize that, at that time, I did not really think so and I was not the only one. We were often speaking about it in family, in not very laudatory terms, because we could not then understand what we can pull of this today out, with the hindsight that we have. The time was not distant indeed where Jean-Claude and me, we had found ourselves somewhat in the place of this little toddler. He had moreover the same first name as me. I remember for example, this time when she had undertaken to make me less "delicate". I must have been nine or ten years, and whereas we were alone at her home, she had prepared us soup with only the beef fat. I can still see this hot water, on which these great yellowish rings floated, which had given me so much nausea. I recognize now that all over the world, many children would have been of it, and would be still today extremely happy of that. It was for me a small "torture" that, thank God, have not killed me for all that. These kinds of actions brought a lot of moral suffering to our whole family, but my little bullying was actually very little, in relation to the difficulties my parents had already been living for several years.

The unpaid continued to multiply in their resources and their outstanding grew unfortunately in the same proportions concerning their suppliers. It was therefore becoming vital to cease the artisanal activity or to develop in a more flourishing niche and especially more reliable. They believed find it, by the electrification of village halls, whose contracting authority and project management was entrusted to architects. The cash advance was in relation to the importance of the yards, but it was to risk one's all, the dice of the ultimate chance. The promises were moreover very enticing according to the estimated payment schedule, so at all costs the work schedule was respected. Often we gathered all our efforts behind our poor dad, but the settlement schedule never followed. Such adversity had of course a spiritual origin linked on his own person, but I will not address it in this work, this part of the past not belonging to me. They then had to run very often around looking for a few francs to pay for the fatal invoice, run in search of the complacent supplier who would grant the extra time, but as otherwise dad was inexorably discouraged, it was only postponed. We then began to see him in total disarray, until he could no longer go to work anymore. Every morning, often during hours, he was going from the car to the kitchen, to pour himself a few centiliters of wine, sometimes even did not drink it, went back to check if such tool was not

missing, came back, returned again... He no longer had any decision-making power, no more energy.

I will not hide you, that at these times he did not drink sometimes a little too much, because sixth of glass by sixth of glass, it happened to him quite often, to drink more than would have been necessary. The problem was not there, but in front of the incomprehension of such adversity, he could no longer overcome his anguish.

I do not know if it was this context which called out especially my parents or if these are the words which we was sometimes hearing the narrative, both perhaps? In a farm which still exists today, all the cows had died the same day and many other details that I do not remember very well, because people said acts of witchcraft. According to their knowledge, my parents, just like my grandmother did, spoke to "people" who, once again and as always, had "powers" against bewitchments.

I do not mean by this that the couple who came to visit us was not sincere, but I now know that the small packets of salt that these people made us wear for "protect us bad spells" could not, as for them, do nothing more than salt soup. They left the house, saying that we would discover soon enough that some relatives acted by occult practices on the family. That was going to be the case some time after, in very painful circumstances, but nevertheless let's maintain our chronology.

Since the beginning of this chapter, we hardly brought forward in time and stayed in the years fifty-nine, sixty, year of my school basic examination. My spelling errors undoubtedly did not too handicap me, since I had it. As they had done for my brother and my sister, in spite of their situation that was on the edge of the abyss, my parents offered to me a beautiful new bicycle. That was finished the old repainted bike on which I had installed by means of a big rotary switch, a system to dim one's headlights to not dazzle drivers. I had since then eight speeds, so when I was small errands for my parents in Nogent-le-Rotrou, my best chronometer had no relation to that of the past, think; I won no least ten minutes on the round trip.

It was going be quickly used for the first time this beautiful bike, because as of the beginning of the holidays, with Serge, a friend of childhood, we left to bicycle and Jean Claude to moped, to make eight to ten days of camping on the Norman coasts. Our equipment was a bit sketchy and it happened to us of have to eat almost raw potatoes, but we all three have a wonderful memory of this time.

As always, this year my holidays were busy, because, beyond all the small daily activities, I had my "shipbuilding" in each of my little free moments. I had somewhat grown and my boats had of course grown with me. I indeed built two very pretty sailboats during my adolescence. I built indeed two very pretty sailboats during my adolescence. The first sailed at the mercy of the wind until the day I disassembled it almost completely to put an electric motor. The other, the largest, sailed without a sail, because I never had the funds available to build the sail and lost the passion of the sailboats with my childhood dreams.

I had constructed them, in a small house that my parents had bought around the year fifty five, fifty six, to serve as a radio repair workshop. I liked to find me alone, driven by my dreams of great sea voyages. I felt good there! At my fourteen, when I began school by correspondences for the certificate of secondary education like my elders, I thus settled there. I spent most of my time working in one of the rooms I had set up for me like office, but my attendance was not going to preserve me from a quite rough mistake. I must have been fourteen and a half, fifteen years old and of course I began to dream of women. I had already flirted, certainly, with one or two girlfriends, but to my great shame unacknowledged, I had not yet seen the body of a naked woman. I lived it as a shameful ignorance that I dared not confess to anyone, with a form of obsession that was going push me to a very bad deed.

I couldn't tell you why exactly, my sister had come to wash in the room next to my place of work, but I know she had come there. These rooms were only separated by an old door with a few slots and in spite of my resistance to the temptation offered to me, it had quickly become too large, unsustainable. I knew all the nonsense and the forbidden, but I could not resist this temptation. **In the same attitude of heart that when I had lowered myself to copy on my little classmate, I then lowered myself into a deep disgust of myself, as driven by a perverse but necessary need, to look through the slit of this old door. I did not do it banally, as if by gaiety of heart in the joy of an**

unexpected windfall, but in the moral debasement which makes all the difference, that is why we will have occasion to speak again of it in the second part.

It was around this time, I think, after the disappearance of my dreams of escape at sea and the construction of my sailboats that gradually born in me this latent desire since the small bike in the shop window to run the cycling races. I dreamed in front of my idols of the Tour de France and the very long and glorious stages they accomplished marveled me. I identified with them in their personal remarkable achievements and an opportunity to do the same was going soon to mature in me. Colette had worked for a long time at the post office in front of the home and had ended up taken off. In the spring 1961, whereas she made a training course in Orleans, the thought came to me to visit her. The idea of my first solitary bike expedition was born.

We lived about ninety kilometers away, and in my fourteen and half years, the inaccessible exploit would have been to travel one hundred and eighty kilometers in the same day. I told you above for the construction very quickly abandoned of this electric train; it had given me the reflex to assess the difficulties and my motivation, before undertaking great things. This time I prepared so well all the details and with the agreement and all the recommendations of my parents, one Thursday morning at the dawn of the day, I took the direction of Orléans.

I had not forgotten the life buoy, for a stop was planned for my paternal grandparents at Châteaudun, another at an uncle twenty-five kilometers away, another twenty-five kilometers, and I was in Orleans. The same stages in opposite directions were planned knowing that if the performance was above my strength, I could always receive hospitality on my return. The same evening, at about nine-thirty, I had accomplished the feat. The last few kilometers had not been without pain, but I was satisfied. I had missed the appointment with my sister, but I had successful to surpass my own limits.

Many circumstances were going then to precipitate during this rout and I do not necessarily guarantee you the good order of them, but it does not matter. There was firstly, the stroke of my paternal grandfather, who remained seven months confined to bed in a semi-coma. During all this time, mom was going to have to go to her bedside three days out of four, in order to share the difficulties with my uncles and aunts while dad stayed working. I believe to remember me that during this particularly painful period for him in terms of health and moral, he was a little strengthened in the face of financial difficulties. The fact that Colette became independent of the family, through her work at the postal and telecommunications authorities, as well as Jean-Claude who had followed her in the same way, were perhaps encouragements for him, especially as my fifteen years barely gone, I was going to take the same path. It was certainly only a small boost to the family budget as for me, but in parallel to my correspondence courses, I began to work two hours a day at the post office opposite my home.

In the day following my grandfather's funeral, with the heavy heart, I still lingered to read the funeral notices in the local paper, when completely by chance my eyes stopped on a small article announcing the general meeting of the Dunois Bike Club which offered its services to new recruits. My blood only made one turn, I did not know to do until this moment how to become racing cyclist, and there, the door was wide open for me. My insistence was so great with dad who was extremely reserved in the face of my enthusiasm, but ends up to give in and accompanied me. Unexpected thing for me, the cadet coach was none other than one of his best classmates. So he allowed me to apply for a license on the spot and a few weeks later, with my very small salary, I bought a used race bike with which I started training in early December. At New Year's Eve I raced my first cyclo-cross race and the third of March following my first road race.

Since the small bicycle at the store window, much water had passed under the bridges but my passion had remained the same one.

A few days after my first cyclo-cross, Colette who had met the one whom the Lord intended for her, got married. I had therefore a new friend, a new brother, a brother-in-law, Gilbert. In civilian life, he was hairdresser and as he was then at the military service, he was still hairdresser. So he was a perfect soldier who, I believe, never carried a weapon.

During all his army time, despite all the anguish she felt to remain isolated, Colette continued the temporary replacements of the postmasters. She was always more or less depressed because of various family circumstances and the moral shock, that she had undergone a few years earlier, by the loss of a classmate girl friend victim of a road accident. This first catastrophe had deeply

marked her, but one other, much more terrible still, was going like destroying her and to affect us all deeply.

A friend classmate girl, Therese, had entered just like Collette in the same job of interim replacement as postmistress. This had only consolidated an already existing friendship between them, but that was going to become all the more destructive because of the events. One evening, one of their colleague, an agent of the same service that they both, had come to find Thérèse at his usual restaurant. By the end of the evening, they had separated in front of the post office where she worked, but in the next minute he had retraced his steps towards her. Innocently she had opened again the door...

What could be more banal among colleagues? The next morning, on the arrival of the mailmen, she was discovery lifeless in a pool of blood. He had persecuted her, beat her black and blue and had ended up killing her by plunging a blade of penknife into the temple. She had not given the combination of the safe in spite of her martyrdom, although the theft was the only motive of the crime.

Such an infamy shocked many postal workers in the region and our family in particular, but Colette took many long years to fully recover of it.

Although badly shaken like everyone else, my life did not stop there for all that, with its relentless daily life. My work had passed to three hours a day in office, my correspondence courses, my cycling training, the maintenance of my bike, the races; I had not time to think about anything else. Yes, of course! I was going to forget: Young ladies! It was this year that I ceased, in desperation, to look at one of my neighbors as my future wife. A tall lady, think, she was one year older than me, I did not interest her. She had been the first because I fallen in love with her since I was ten, but some other firsts, there will be going many others. As for the rout of my faith, it was going to last twenty-four or twenty-five years and to involve me in many disappointments. However, let us not go too quickly!

Barely a few months after the death of my first grandfather, the second one fell ill. Another unfortunate aberration of my "sweet and tender" maternal grandmother, about whom I have already spoken to you at length! It was winter, it had snowed during the day, and she was coughing. She was obviously just as domineering with her husband that she could be with the rest of her family. It would seems he did bad manner, to put suction cups. It was quite possible, but still, but the fact remains that in order to have peace, he went to fetch mom by night, on foot, under the snow and an icy wind, while three kilometers separated the two houses. At five hundred meters from his goal he fell and in this freezing storm he could not stand up again. He was rescued while he was half-dead from cold, and remained tetraplegic because of that. Once again, mom devoted herself as much as she could. In a similar situation to the previous one, the context was opposed, because as much my paternal grandmother was really gentle and kind, so much there ..., but do not repeat us.

The months passed, and just as the leaves fall under the storms of autumn, the illusions of mom concerning her parents were going from a blow to fly away. Remember "the two peoples" who had announced the occult practices of close relatives; we're getting there.

The summer was gone and my grandfather was always paralyzed. One day of autumn, unexpectedly mom was gone to my grandparent's home, and had found my grandfather alone, completely sunk into his bed. In an obvious spontaneity, she stepped forward to lift him up, to seat him again, but, overcome by a great fright, he tried to prevent her. She did not understand and insisted, but the same scenario happened again. The third time, she does not took account of his behavior, and discovered, at the height of surprise, two books under his pillows??? He was not able obviously any more read since a long time! So what were these books doing here, whereas he had never read? What a funny thing! Like attracted by a form of incredulity in front of this discovery, in spite of the prohibition expressed by the eyes of her father, she seized them and read the title of the first. Oh! Surprise! Oh! Stupor! Under her eyes, she could read: "These marvelous prayers of the sorcerers and witches".

It was for Mom, the biggest pair of slaps she never received from her parents. A mountain would have fallen on her head that she would not have been knocked out more.

According to my grandmother, it was him who obliged her to have this kind of practices... Perhaps... It does not concern me. It was she, nevertheless, who became angry and usurped

these books from the hands of mom. It was again she, who says later not to be able to destroy them, because to have already given them... In short! Let's move on, because life was going on and that kind of thinking would bring us nothing positive.

In the winter of sixty-two, sixty-three, a few weeks after the events I have just reported to you, I was always caught up in the process, correspondence courses, work at the post office, now four hours a day, the training, the races, the races, because there were the cyclo-cross in winter, the young ladies; when an epidemic of mumps outbreak was declared. I was very boastful, as many are at sixteen seventeen years, but certainly quite beyond the average and still, I minimize. With truth or not, I began therefore to fear nothing more, no more mumps than witchcraft problems. For sorcery, it was true, I had become too much reckless, to believe myself vulnerable to this childishness of old biddies. I began to believe not much in God... Satan? You must be joking!! Ah, ah, ah! But the mumps, they had caught up me. I found me confined in bed with a high fever and a very strong evil at the belly, without evil of throat nor nothing at the ears. The doctor diagnosed appendicitis. I was thus admitted to the hospital, prepared for the operation, but the surgeon, puzzled, did not want to operate on me. The following day, in the evening, I was in a semi-comatose state that was getting worse by the hour, at the point to fear peritonitis. The following morning, it was not needed to be neither a surgeon nor doctor to emit a good diagnostic: I had a testicle that had quadrupled in volume, I had mumps. Thank you Lord to have taken care of me, whereas I already rejected you, because if I had been operated that day, I would not be normally here, to write!

For the rest of my life, normally that would not raised a problem, at least not for having children, and that have been the case. But for the rest of my life ... Oh la la !!! Everything happened in my head. For me who entirely masked my timidity behind my bragging, it was a very serious handicap that God has allowed. A complex that was going to follow me a very long time, even though no one ever really realized it!

Let me underline, in the last four lines, how profound a spiritual reality I have had the opportunity to experience. Of course, we will come back to this in the second part, to emphasize the way the enemy uses to hide himself in our carnal psychological construction.

In the months that followed, just as Colette had received a very strong moral shock by the death of Thérèse, Jean Claude was going to undergo one of size. He had his driving license and he often went to the Beau-Chêne (Beautiful-Oak) at my grandparents' place to do their shopping; or simply drive my grandmother who had made few concessions for this time. He had remained more attach to her than I could be myself and my parent felt for her, more pity than grudge, which had helped to iron out temporarily relationships. That day, he came back with her as usual, without anything to suggest an abnormal situation. He opened the top of the two-leaved door in the natural carefreeness of his nineteen years, but remained frozen in amazement and dismay at the spectacle of our grandfather hanging on the end of a rope. During this small time of loneliness, despite his complete paralysis, by what demonic forces had he found enough energy to organize everything? I had been obliged to place a table under a hook that supported at ceiling a heavy kerosene suspension, put a chair, found a rope that he had been attached to the ceiling, tie a knot... He could not used, nor his hands, neither his legs. He had to be made to eat, to raise him in great suffering to make his needs. He was probably going to tap into his great distress and all the desperation of his life, to get there ??? He was buried in the cemetery of his small village and once again, on the fringes of all these tribulations, the life continued.

I do not know if it is about a whole or simply the fact of having temporarily stopped the bike because of my annoying disease, but this period also marks the beginning of my Saturday night outings. It was then that I experienced my first states of drunkenness and the dances that finished only at the early dawn. During one of these outings, to crown the whole, Jean-Claude who driven certainly rather quickly, but possessed a very good dexterity at the wheel, had an accident on the last icy plate, the last Sunday, of the last week, of the last month, of the long winter sixty two sixty-three. After having repaired Panhard's fragile gearbox a few months earlier, at each leisure time, we both worked on the bodywork. My hopes of success to the certificate of secondary education had almost completely vanished with the mumps and I made my courses in dotted line. I had begun to take again the bike with difficulty, as for my work, it was struggled along. At this point in time I had luck to be asked by the direction of the postal services, at the same function as my

sister, as temporary postmaster on the department of Eure-et-Loir. I was certainly not a holder, since I had not passed any contest, but I found myself at less than seventeen years old with a salary, including travelling expenses, about double of the index-linked guaranteed minimum wage of this time. So I was going from town to village, eight days here, one month that, during more than two years.

Weary to see the court bailiffs, my parents were also going to turn over a new page this same year. At few months of interval, they found one and the other an salaried employment in a multinational company in Nogent-le-Rotrou (fourteen kilometers from home). Jean Claude, as to him, went to the army during eighteen months, and got married on his return! Odette became my sister-in-law.

As I approached my eighteen years, in July 1964, I began to take courses of rules of the road and driving in the hope of finally being able to give up my old moped. In September, six days after my birthday, I got my driver's license at the first time. The previous Sunday I had gone to buy my first used car, so I came back with the beautiful black "Simca Aronde" that Jean Claude and Dad went to get during my exam.

A thing finally for which I was happened to be to the height of my "great" brother and my "great" sister, who had passed it, both also at the first time. It's not so easy to be the little youngest, when you look a little too much at the "big" models that you have in front of you. When we believe we have reached their level, they have already gone further, impossible to walk by their side. On the other hand, I was going from passing fancy in passing fancy; they seemed to me more beautiful than each other. I counted my scores. Forgive me Lord, all the sufferings that I have been able to inflict on others.

One of them was nevertheless standing out very strongly in my heart, Caroline. She was Parisian and I was not often going to see her. At the weekend, when by chance I went there, she was always, always, always available and was awaiting me. She was so happy to see me that she was laughing, laughing from happiness and joy. Well me! You will believe me if you want! The big braggart with all his complexes that I was, the Casanova of the ladies, I loved her I loved her I loved her! But the problem was here, when she was laughing with happiness, I thought she mocked. I imagined that in my absence, she was going to see others. Everything could have proved my mistake, but **I was: Jealous!** And then one day, at my phone call at the bottom of her house, she came down as quickly joining me as usual, but she no longer laughed. I had remained at least two long years without giving any sign of life, she had lost patience. I had made her suffer too much, she was going to get married. For a moment she hesitated to come back to me, then probably remembered all the hours spent waiting for me in vain. We both parted very sadly, for in my heart it was not only sadness, but deep despair. It was because of this failed love that for about twenty years, I called All my Cars "CAROLINE". How many misfortunes, how many sufferings, we inflict us each other through our misunderstandings. The man does the harm he does not want to do, but does not do the good he would like to do.

I needed one second almost similar experiment, to understand and reject the jealousy and suspicion, not finding me worthy of such baseness.

In order to bring you the outcome of this story, I have somewhat anticipated its final chronology. Around the time of the years Sixty-four, sixty-five, I thus continued to make cycling races, but I was less and less assiduous in the training. Here again, I remembered the scathing criticism I had made a few years before, when I started cycling and an "Ace" in my eyes, wasted his energy to party more than reason, the day before even races. In this area too I put a stone in my basket, understanding that we often become worse than those we judge.

Before going to army, like had recommended to me the dear mistress of the Post office who had led us ones and the others in this way, I entered in a contest to secure my tenure to benefit from the security of the job on my return. I had not certainly chosen most difficult, quite to the contrary. As my brother had done before me, I passed a postman contest. Thus, a few months before my incorporation, I took for disguise a beautiful navy blue outfit, to go from door to door to deposit the mail in the mailboxes.

The work did not displease to me in itself, but was so repetitive, than I did not feel in my element, not myself. It must be say that in the Parisian office in which I had been transferred, there was a disastrous atmosphere of vulgarity that did not represent my naturalness at all. I did not want

though to shock anyone and thus I took the same attitude as the others. Because I was copying their language, sometimes, I was probably even more vulgar, for I did not know the real limits, but it was not me. I can say that despite my efforts of adaptation and integration, the general atmosphere was so vulgar in this immense sorting office, that I had continually the impression of being another, to live another life than mine.

Vulgarity and obscenity were such that they were like degradation, a voluntary debasement of each one. I however believe that individually, each one was intrinsically different, because I keep a good memory of those I have known better. Most of them were considerate, affable, courteous, but the group effect was really more than harmful and I do not think that none really escaped that obscene climate.

On the Fourth of November 1965, on the day of Mom's birthday, I was called in the army and incorporated in the Paris suburbs, in Montlhéry.

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