

Chapter 18

The Cold War

Gianni Rodari — *The Grammar of Fantasy*
One forgotten word can spark a revolution.

NO!

Amazing how one tiny two-letter word can set off a cold war, an endless siege and a bombardment on repeat!

The war of attrition started with the call of the North: 3h33 of voice monologues every day, without fail, all through the long winter months!

He lays siege so I'll join him in *Lower Valhalla*. It's his one goal, his obsession. He begs, he sings me "The Lament of the Abandoned Viking", he guilt-trips me, he flies off the handle:

Him — You've got nothing, I've got everything, come and live with me! You don't want to? You don't love me! Yada yada yada...

But just the thought of being stuck in his *drak-car* again, with Big Dog, the cold and his temper, and I've only one fear: ending up outside in the snow, at -10 °C, in a soggy frozen nature reserve, miles from a living soul, in his country, where I don't speak the language.

I can't help it, every cell in my body digs its heels in. No, not the cold! Every cell in my brain digs its heels in. No, not dependence! In short, NO! And make that a double!

His live-aboard longship is 12 m², his hangar 300 m². His playground does it all: he puts up walls for a garage, an office, a workshop, a storeroom, shops, you name it. But for my massages? Not even two walls meeting in a corner. The king of breeze blocks is out of stock. I protect my independence, he thinks I don't love him! And nobody's lying!

Six months to find a job, three CVs a day, a proper marathon! But I'm coping. The fifty-something who's been her own boss for 25 years has rather forgotten her salaried days... And given what's happened lately, I can't say I miss them. But I'm not throwing in the towel. I haven't said my last word.

What really wears me down is being cut short by his daily assaults! I've forgotten what a full night's sleep feels like, and the hummingbirds have run off with my hammock.

Sunday Is Showtime!

The journalist hands them a game — I've brought you a Magic 8 Ball: let's leave it to chance. Give it a shake... and read!

The author — Ooh, I love it!... Here goes... *Kiss me!*

The Viking — Bang on target!

The author turns to the Viking — Come to think of it, why are you so angry with me and so rattled at the same time? Is it because you love me and won't admit it?

The Viking — Maybe... I never denied my feelings for you, but you pushed me away!

The author — Wrong! I let myself love you, I followed you to *Lower Valhalla* three weeks after we met, without a single no! I wrote a novel about it!

The Viking — Well, your life was so dull without me! I got you out of your comfort zone, we went all over the place, sailing, camping, it was brilliant! But no, you stayed rooted at home! You didn't love me!

The author — Too right, your life is terrible! A non-stop beer festival!

The Viking — Exactly! I've got a six-pack in the *drak-car*! Let's celebrate getting back together and party!

The Hammock and the Hummingbirds

A novel by Karine Baridon



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