
NOKIA
banners inside

BIC STOCK

I had paid the lunch bill. Thirty-five euros. Without hesitation.

And with one immediate result: none of the women present had expected it, but it was only the beginning of the end of a meeting.

As we walked along the Seine, they kept asking exploratory questions here and there. I knew exactly where they wanted to go. And I took them there one by one, by the hand, without any of them realizing it.

I asked them whether they knew the story of Napoleon Bonaparte standing with his horse on the highest hill, watching how he would win and observing his opponents being overwhelmed. None of them could answer. And yet I was only the Italian intruder talking about French history. Ahahahah.

Then the moment arrived. We were sitting in front of a café, all of us eating ice cream, when the most experienced woman finally took the floor and asked the first real question.

The spinning-top game was over. Everyone was now back on the ground. The time had come to listen without masks and understand how this game was going to end.

On behalf of all of them, she renewed her gratitude for my having accepted the invitation, but explained that they would eventually have to report the outcome of our meeting to their husbands. After all, I had borrowed the beating heart of BIC COMPANY WORLDWIDE, and I had done it for only thirty-five euros.

Chanel was standing off to one side, watching me. She looked genuinely amazed and seemed to be wondering who I really was. Later she would confess that she had never met anyone like me.

“I believe,” said the lady, “that considering your abilities, all of our men put together do not possess one quarter of your capabilities. And I truly believe that you are capable of doing exactly what you wrote—launching a takeover bid for BIC. But my question is this: How much do you want to sell GILLETTENARRATIVE.COM for? And I promise you that within twenty-four hours we will sign the contract and I will have the money—or the stock—deposited wherever you wish.”

I looked at her and replied: “Why do you want my website?”

Her answer came immediately. “We want to place NOKIA banners inside the APPLE website. Is that clear enough? Mr. Frega, you have no idea how far we are willing to go to obtain your site. For us, it has become fundamental. It is essential if we are to keep living without losing anything. It is true that we generate three billion dollars in annual revenue, but our operating profitability has always been in double digits. We do not carry the brand-distribution costs of companies forced to move enormous quantities of products around the world. Our loss-profit dynamics operate in three-digit territory.”

Then she stopped and said: “Without wasting time in endless conversation, let me make you an offer.”

And she did. She made the kind of offer that no logical or rational person would ever refuse.

But my answer was this. “You can read my books for free without paying a single dollar. But you cannot take away fifty-eight years of family dignity inside GILLETTE simply for money. Everything you see. Everything I have built. Everything. Is worth only one U.S. dollar. And I will give that dollar only to my mother, as it should be. A son never disowns his mother. He remains her son forever. And he would never allow anyone to carry out reckless or dishonorable actions against her. He is only her son.”

They asked whether they could accompany me back to the hotel. I thanked them and said no. I said goodbye and walked away.

But the day was not over. I still had to lose their security team. They could no longer understand where I was going. After three hours inside the Paris metro system, they lost me. They became tired. They gave up.

And I returned to the shared room among Indians and Brazilians, the son of a greater God to whom one day I would have to grant an audience, just as a father eventually grants an audience to the worst son he has.

Ferdinando