

THE BIC BOARD AT THE SHERATON

Sheraton — Nando the Scribe

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I arrived exactly on time.

She was not there.

Then my phone rang.

It was Chanel. She apologized. She was in a taxi, still on the road, and would be only five minutes late.

A few minutes later I saw her enter the hotel.

Long blonde hair. Tall. Elegant. The kind of presence that required no introduction.

She approached the front desk, checked in, left her luggage, and then walked toward me.

"Mr. Frega, good afternoon. I am Chanel. I already have the advantage of knowing who you are. The video on your website and your photograph did not create false expectations. And it is also true that you did not use any filters. You really do look exactly as advertised."

"Thank you, madam. Please, have a seat. May I offer you a coffee or something else to drink? Take your time. I am in no hurry, and I know how a gentleman should behave in the company of a lady."

"No, thank you. I already had coffee at the airport. In fact, I am wearing a new fragrance today. I hope you like it."

The fragrance caught my attention.

"What is the name of it?" I asked. "It is completely new to my senses."

She smiled.

"Well, its name is an old French classic. It answers a very simple question: how do you defeat an Italian without ever stepping onto the field?"

I looked directly into her eyes.

Beyond her elegance, she was remarkably intelligent. That alone made me more willing to continue the conversation. A strong sense of empathy emerged almost immediately.

She began explaining the purpose of her visit, but I found myself distracted by the way she moved as she spoke. She noticed it. Every so often she would pause and ask whether everything was clear.

Clear only to a certain extent.

She possessed the kind of presence that makes concentration difficult.

Then she said something that completely changed the direction of the meeting.

"Five senior executives from BIC France came with me today. They would like to meet you. That is where the real conversation begins."

My attention immediately returned to the subject.

She signaled for them to come forward. I had agreed to meet them, after all.

Within moments, seven of us were gathered around a table surrounded by four couches.

At first I assumed it was some kind of misunderstanding.

Why would people travel all the way from France for a meeting with me?

The oldest among them introduced himself.

"My name is M… A. I currently serve as CEO of BIC France."

I still had no idea what they wanted.

I asked everyone to introduce themselves.

The picture became clear very quickly.

The entire leadership board of BIC stood before me.

The reason for the meeting was the editorial takeover bid I had launched online.

They had taken it seriously.

In fact, they had taken it seriously enough to begin questioning their own future. Would they be repositioned inside the new organization? Would they need to seek employment elsewhere?

And somehow the connection had been arranged through Chanel, who remained mostly silent while communicating through gestures. A presence impossible to overlook.

I explained that I was merely a writer and nothing more.

No one believed me.

The response was unanimous.

"When someone from Gillette speaks, even our shareholders listen in silence. Starting with the BIC family itself."

I asked for a short break and used the excuse of a coffee to decide what to say next.

The situation was unusual.

Yet for the first time I became certain of something: Narrative causes far more disruption than promises.

And only now was I beginning to understand it.

Ferdinando

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