

Börkur Sigurbjörnsson

Oui

flash fiction



Urban Volcano

Oui

Börkur Sigurbjörnsson

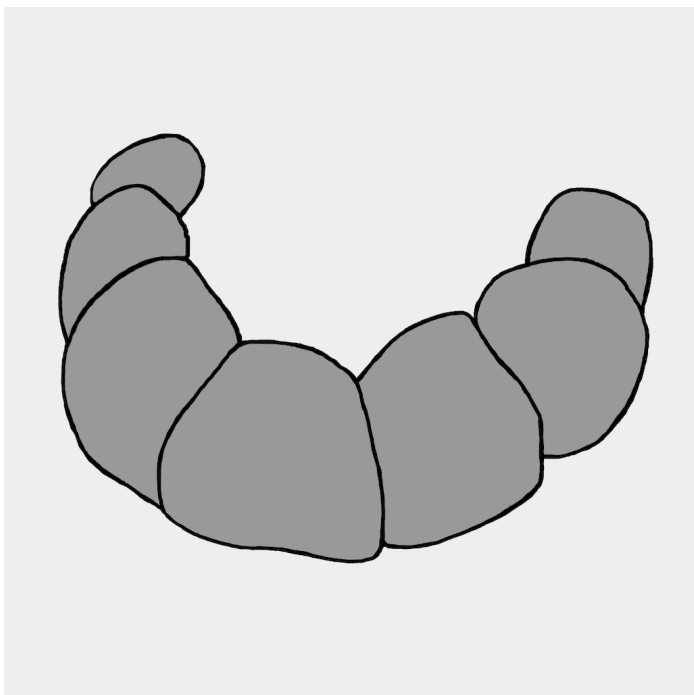
Creative Commons (BY-NC-ND) – 2024
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Illustrations: Börkur Sigurbjörnsson

Publisher: Urban Volcano

<https://urbanvolcano.net/>

This story can be reproduced by any means one can think of, such as, but not limited to, photocopying, chiseling into a limestone rock, or reading out-loud during a work-related Zoom conference call from a bathtub at midsummer solstice, provided that the author is referenced, the content is not modified, and the reproduction is not done commercially.



OUI

I sat down at a nice looking café to have breakfast. Tomorrow I was to give a conference presentation about graph theory but today I was going to ramble about the streets of Paris and get to know what the city had to offer. I did not have any particular itinerary planned. I was simply going to go on a random walk along the city's street network and see where my feet would take me. The only thing I knew for certain was that I had decided to try not to behave like a tourist. I was going to blend seamlessly into the crowd as if I were a local.

A waiter came over to my table and asked what he could offer me. I pronounced the sentence I had repeated constantly in my mind since opening my eyes this morning.

“Croissant et café au lait,” I said as confident as I possibly could. Nevertheless the sentence did not sound quite as good when I said it out loud as it had done in my mind all morning. The intonation was different. Stiffer. Out loud, the words flowed like a pile of rocks falling off the back of a truck in pouring rain, but not like the calm brook on a sunny day I had imagined all morning.

“Un croissant et un café crème,” the waiter murmured as he dutifully wrote down my order in a small notebook.

Rather than walking away from the table and into the kitchen to prepare my order, the waiter stood at my table and poured over me a river of french words whose meaning was completely beyond my level of comprehension. It had not been part of the scene I had imagined all morning that the ordering process would include anything beyond a simple request and an unconditional execution. Now I had to stay strong and don't admit defeat. I couldn't give up. I couldn't lose the cool. I had to imagine how a proper Parisian would react.

“Oui,” I said casually when the waiter finally stopped talking.

The waiter nodded, smiled and walked over to the kitchen. I had to admit to myself that it could be a challenge to try to behave like a local without knowing hardly any french. Was I perhaps getting myself into trouble? What could it possibly have been that I had said yes to? It could hardly be anything

serious, though, since the waiter had taken my answer as if it had been quite expected. I could therefore relax again and turn to my premeditated plan.

I observed the people in the street and tried to find something in their conduct that I could imitate in order to fool people into thinking I was a local. A quick observation revealed two aspects that were noteworthy about the Parisians. They smoked cigarettes and walked across the street against a red traffic light. I decided to pass up on the smoking but I was determined that on my rambling along the city streets I was not going to wait for a green light if the traffic allowed me to cross.

It wasn't long until the waiter returned and put a cup of milky coffee and a croissant on the table in front of me. The breakfast looked exactly as I had imagined it. My yes to the waiter's oration did not seem to have done any damage—whatever it had been I had said yes to. I decided not to dwell on that thought any longer. I would just have to accept my fate and go through the rest of my life without ever knowing what the waiter had said.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Börkur is an avid storyteller with a keen eye for quirky characters, funny dialogs and vivid scenario descriptions. Much of his writing falls within the genre of realistic fiction and his stories are more often than not based on real events in the author's life. Although the tales contain grains of truth, they are melded with fiction, making the reader curious to know the line between reality and fantasy.

Books

Among Other Things, flash fiction (2024)

Talk To Strangers, short stories (2019)

Flash 52, flash fiction (2017)

999 Abroad, short stories (2012)

Links

Börkur Sigurbjörnsson

Urban Volcano