

Börkur Sigurbjörnsson

# Oui

flash fiction



Urban Volcano

# Oui

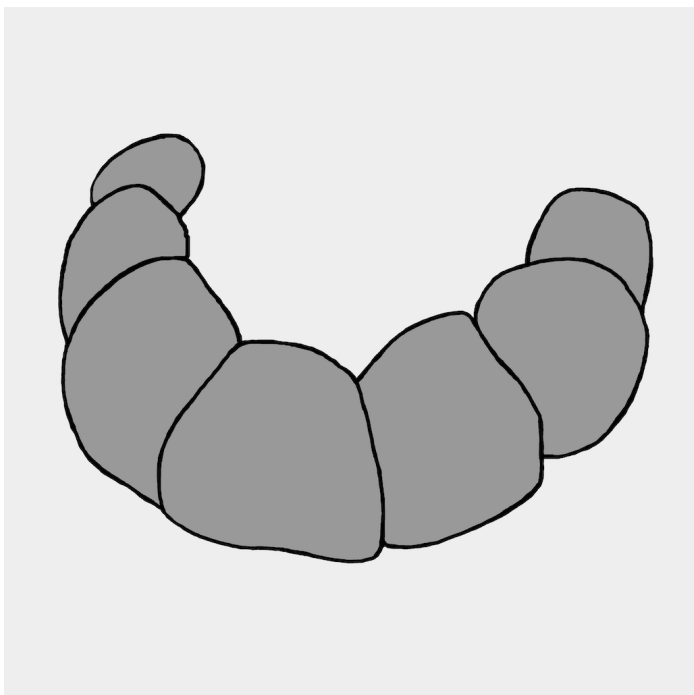
Börkur Sigurbjörnsson

Creative Commons (BY-NC-ND) – 2023  
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>

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 through Zoom 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 a 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 destinations planned. I was simply going to go on a random walk along the city's street network and see where my feet would bring me. I had decided to try to not behave like a tourist. I was going to try to blend seamlessly into the crowd as if I were a local.

A waiter came 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 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 like I had imagined all morning.

The waiter dutifully wrote down my order on a piece of paper, before pouring over me a river of french words whose meaning I was completely clueless about. Judging by the tone of his voice I could imagine it had been a question. Now I had to stay strong and don't admit defeat. I could not lose the cool.

“Oui,” I replied without hesitating, in the hope that the question could be answered with a yes or a no.

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 since the waiter took my answer as if it had been quite expected.

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 smoke cigarettes and walk across the street against a red traffic light. I decided to pass up on the smoking but I was determined not to wait on a red light if the traffic allowed me to cross.

The waiter came back 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 question did not seem to have hurt—whatever it had been I had said yes to. I decided not to dwell on that thought any longer. I would just have to go through the rest of my life without ever knowing what the waiter had asked.



## About The Author

---

Börkur Sigurbjörnsson is a computer scientist by training and makes his living by developing software, but writes fiction in his spare time. Börkur is born and raised in Reykjavík, Iceland, but has over the past decades lived in various cities around the world, with prolonged stays in Amsterdam, Barcelona, Burseid, Düsseldorf, London, Montevideo and Reykjavík. Börkur regularly publishes flash fiction and short stories on his website Urban Volcano.

## Books By The Author

Talk To Strangers, short stories (2019)

Flash 52, flash fiction (2017)

999 Abroad, short stories (2012)

## Other links

Börkur Sigurbjörnsson (homepage)

Urban Volcano