

FIGHTING FOR THE TRUTH

“Freedom of the press: the right to publish newspapers, magazines, and other printed matter without governmental restriction and subject only to the laws of libel, obscenity, sedition, etc”

I really wish I was not doing this article. It hurts from the bottom of my heart and I don't know what is going to happen when I hit the send button. But they cannot get away with it.

10th of May. I arrive in Paris, my boss sent me here to interview a famous anonymous artist that was popping up in the paint world selling works of art to different associations and to the Paris' city hall. It was not supposed to be a dangerous or risky task to do as it was just meeting with him/her at a café and ask him/her few questions.

I went out of the hotel by 11 pm because we had met at 13 pm and I wanted to see the city around as I only have travelled here for job or business.

After buying some pens and new paper in the city center I attended to my meeting. The café's name was “Le passage”, it is a small place in a nice and not very noisy area, perfect for a meeting like this.

12 pm. I start getting nervous my boss told me that ‘Le Prince’ (the name of this artist) was going to come at 11 but here there's only me, my laptop and the barista getting just as bored as me. I decided to text my boss if I really hate something it's impunctuality. She told me that ‘le prince’ was not able to come, that he had personal issues and he was sorry, so the meeting was postponed to the next day at the same time.

I always try to look the bright side of things and this situation was not going to be less. I toured every single famous place in Paris and bought souvenirs for my whole family.

While I was walking next to the Seine river, I took into account that a couple of girls was pointing at me and I instinctively approached to them. As I was getting closer to them they started screaming my name, at that time I was completely confused. It turned out that they were two of my best friends from college, Susan and Julie. They told me that they had been living in Paris since they adopted their child called Alain. I met him later when they went to pick him up from kindergarten. He is a three year old with blond, curly hair and a bit naughty. We went all together to a café with a playground where Alain could play.

We spoke about how our lives had changed after university, about the wedding they celebrated recently, about how their jobs were... Then they asked me why I was there I explained to them what just happened that morning and I could tell that they were a bit uncomfortable. I asked them if there was anything wrong

but Julie suddenly jumped off the table. She went straight to the park and started screaming "Alain! Alain! Where are you Alain?!" Susan and I ran to the park and started looking at the trees, asking people... But then Julie screamed again "Oh my God Alain why did you leave the park?!" We approached them. The kid was behind a bush with a piece of paper in his little right hand, Susan opened it and told me that it was not a good idea, that I should be away from that artist and everything that has to be with him, then they left. I was so confused I didn't understand anything of what just had happened.

I went the whole way back to the hotel mulling what happened over. What had in common the few minutes of Alain's disappearance with the artist? What was written in the note? I needed answers, so, as soon as I arrived to the hotel, I opened my laptop and started looking for any kind of information that had something to be with this mysterious artist.

The only information that I found was what I already knew, that he had sold several pieces of art to many associations and to the city hall. All of that smelled really bad, so I decided to call my boss again but her phone was off. This was turning so grey, but my curiosity was beyond to the possible danger that could be behind this story.

11th of May. The notification of a text message woke me up. "Hidden number: Don't go to the meeting. You'll regret it." I called my boss again but her phone was still disconnected.

My instinct was telling me that I should attend to the meeting, that if I didn't go something worse could happen so I decided to follow my heart and I started my way to the café.

It did not catch my attention the fact that there wasn't anyone inside the place but I felt that there was something strange that I can not really tell exactly what it was but it was not a nice sensation.

Finally it was 11 o'clock, a figure approached to me, it was a middle age man with a big brown beard and sad eyes. He sat next to me and told me that Le Prince was not going to give the interview, that he had decided to go out of the country for personal issues and that I should not try to contact him.

I got furious. I can not have come to Paris just to buy some souvenirs, and to meet again with two old friends that have ended running away from me. I started yelling at him and telling him that he should have warned me, that the critic that was going to get was going to end up his artistic career and that no one was ever going to pay attention to his art. The man listened to me patiently and when I ended he walked out the door.

I could not believe the bad luck that I was having. In that moment I did not know if I should get my luggage and come back to England or if I should stay there and follow the clues that I did not have.

I opted for the second option. I remembered that one of the biggest buyers of Le Prince was the Paris' mayoress, so it could be a little help to find out something about the mysterious artist.

So there I went. When I arrived to the city hall, a very nice secretary welcomed me, I gave her my name and my newspaper's name and asked her nicely if she could arrange a visit with the mayoress, she said that she was in a reunión, but by the time that she finished, she would tell me. The secretary asked me about the motive of my visit and I told her that as I knew that the mayoress was an art lover, I wanted her to explain me a bit about her artistic preferences.

I was nearly have an hour at the waiting room when the secretary called my name and told me that the mayoress had had to go, that she would call me to interview her other day.

I started saying that it was key to my article, that i came expressly here to talk with her. I became very annoying so she decided to call security, in her absence I took advantage to look around at everything that could be in her computer related to the mayores. I was lucky enough to see the web that was in the computer in that moment, it was a check in just done of a flight with the mayoress' name, the plane was leaving in one hour way to Warsaw.

I took a photo and ran away from there with more information than I expected. I packed my things and caught a taxi way to the airport. On my way, I remembered my friend Leo, who owns me some favors, I called him and asked to buy the same flight that I had seen in the secretary's computer, I sent him the photo that I took and also asked him to buy the seat behind the mayoress' one. Him, confused, asked me so many questions, which I answered with "I will tell you".

I arrived to the airport, payed the taxist and went straight to the terminal that Leo told me.

Finally I was in the queue ready to board, I did not know what could be waiting for me in Poland but I was ready to discover it.

I sat and one minute later the mayoress came. During the flight, she talked by phone two times, one in english, a trivial conversation that did not caught my attention and other in german, which I could understand because of the german I learnt at high school. The mayoress said in this second call if everything was going to be ready for that night and that she was anxious to know how everything was going to end up. When I heard this last phrase, I felt goosebumps and a mix of fear and excitement invaded me.

Someone's phone rang, and it gave me the idea of searching again information of Le Prince. For my surprise, there was an article of a german newspaper that announced a new exposition by the french artist in the Warsaw's National Museum.

We arrived after two hours and a half of flight. It was freezing cold, so the first thing that I did when I got off the plane was buying a coat at the duty-free.

In that space of time I got out of sight the mayoress, but it really did not worried me excessively because I already knew that she was going to be at the exhibition.

I was so hungry, so I asked the taxist to take me to a restaurant near the museum preferently with vegetarian menu.

The taxist left me at the door of a restaurant called "Bulke przez Bibulke". A spanish waitress called Natalia served me, I ordered a cheese bagel with a salad and as a dessert a cup of hot chocolate to heat me up.

I called again my friend Leo and asked him to book me a room in some cheap place, him, not making questions this time, agreed, and ten minutes later he called me back and gave me the place's name and it's location.

The next step was buying a dress for that night, so I went to one shop that Natalia recommended me and rented a black night dress.

Then, I went to the guesthouse, registered myself, left my things and rested a little.

When the time arrived, I went straight to the museum. They had turned down the fountain's lights of the main entrance, there was lots of people... Between the crowd I could recognise the man of the café, he couldn't see me, but I knew that I should be alert the rest of the night, so I entered more in the crowd. While I was looking for the begining of the exhibition, someone caught my attention touching my shoulder, it was Mr. Evans, England's Minister, we met in my beginning as a journalist when he still was not minister, when I saw him, I felt butterflies in my stomach, like the first time that I saw him. He asked me about my presence there, I said that I was in Poland for vacations and one of my friends told me about this exhibition so I decided to come. He looked satisfied with my answers because he did not persisted more. The motives of his presence there, weren't very convincing to me. The Cornwall's mayor asked him to buy a certain work from the exhibition because he could not come.

The museum opened its doors and Marcus and I entered, he found an old friend from college, so I left, not before feeling a bit jealous.

I did not really know where I could go, I was analyzing the situation when a yorkshire terrier with a pink dress and a bow, went directly to my feet breaking my tights. The dog owner cared more about the dog's dress that about my poor feet.

I decided that I should go to the bathroom and throw away my tights.

While I was taking them off, sitting at the wc, two women entered the bathroom, first, they whispered, they looked behind the doors of the different bathrooms without seeing me and started a very interesting conversation. One of them

talked first “She can not discover it, our careers can go phut, and there’s so much money here also, this journalist is not going to ruin it” I deduced that they were talking about me.

“I know, if she has followed Anna from Paris to Poland, she is capable of lots of things, we should do the transactions as soon as possible” I had listened to that voice recently but I did not really know where. They got out of the bathroom, I waited few seconds and then got out. Once outside, a girl from the museum staff approached to me and gave me a folded paper that said: “Le Prince is waiting you in the meetings room for your interview.” At first I doubt, but, what was my main goal? I was going to meet Le Prince, so there I went.

I opened the door and everything was dark, I entered searching for the switch and someone closed the door. The lights came on and I felt a sharp pain on my neck, then everything was blurry. When I woke up, I was still in the same room but tied to a chair and surrounded by people. I started recognising familiar faces, the Paris mayoress, Anna, the man of the café, the “nice” waitress from the restaurant and three men that seemed to be bodyguards.

Anna gave a step forward approaching to me and uncovered my mouth “what are you looking for?, you are messing with people you shouldn’t be messing, answer” “I just want to see Le Prince” “You have been searching for a ghost, Le Prince does not exist, we invented him to get the Money destined for the culture to guarantee our future, politics is ephemeral. We offer you a deal you can not refuse, we will give you a part of our “benefits” if you do not publish nothing of what you have seen or found. Money in exchange of the silence of the media.”

“If I have come here is to denounce an illegality, and I’ll reach the end.”

The bodyguards were approaching to me when the fire alarm rang, Natalia, Anna, the café man and the bodyguards went out of the room and left me there, trapped and with my lungs filling with smoke. Almost unconscious, I reached to see a figure that untied me and got me out of that hell.

It was Marcus, someone told him about what this people was doing and started a fire to get me out of there.

Right now I am at the hotel, I don't know if they are searching me, or if they are at the door of my hotel waiting for me to threaten me again...

I just know that they are not going to silent me.