

The Hammock and the Hummingbirds

My pen is my No — a novel by Karine Baridon · one-page synopsis · c. 98,000 words

Three years after turning her break-up into a novel, a writer is invited onto a TV show, *Dimanche c'est Show*, to talk about her book. Beside her sits the journalist... and the fictional character she created to stand for her ex: the Viking. Not the real man, but his novelised version, who has come to comment on the story and defend himself.

It all began with a *BOOM*. Years after the break-up, Coraline discovers that the Viking has looked at her LinkedIn profile. The anger she thought was long gone erupts like a volcano, and she makes a decision: she is going to write. Her chaos will become a creative goldmine.

Back to the past. Bored of dating apps, Coraline is drawn in by a mysterious photo. The first date is love at first sight, while her parents ring non-stop and her astrological planets comment on the scene. The Viking is a giant: charismatic, generous, unpredictable, with an angel's face, crocodile boots and hands like Michelangelo sculptures covered in engine grease. With him, life becomes an adventure: catamaran sailing on a lake, a road trip through the far North to Bas-Valhalla, nights under the stars.

But the adventure has a price. Coraline discovers the Viking's chaotic family and the childhood trauma behind his extreme behaviour: panic attacks on a train, rage against her boss, run-ins with the police, a giant antenna built in the garden, a 12-metre camper van — the drak-car — in which every manoeuvre turns into a comedy scene and every plan is cancelled within 48 hours. Coraline, a born mediator, keeps the peace, laughs, adapts... until she understands that she is living in a codependent relationship. Her own parents, loving and anxious, ring at every wrong moment and show her where her inability to say no comes from.

On the TV set, the present answers the past. The author and the Viking argue, joke, contradict each other, and the interviews reveal what neither could say back then. The tone is funny-sad: every heavy moment is followed by a laugh.

Little by little, Coraline learns to set limits, refuses to follow the Viking to the far North, and chooses her own safety. Her pen becomes her way of saying no. The novel asks a simple question: how do you get your power back after a toxic relationship? Its answer: by creating.

The novel ends with an invitation to the reader: to create in turn. Its companion website, lehamacetlescolibris.com, makes that invitation real, with the full text free to read, chapters read by the author, original songs, creative challenges and a gallery of readers' creations.

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Working translation: the English text will serve as the basis for a final professional translation.