

*Translated with the help and corrections of*

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## Chapter 4 – Capiscol

### **(Capiscol Industrial Area)**

At 11:00 a.m., every Sunday, Jean-Jacques Rivière was enthusiastically cleaning his superb blue car, a Versailles Cabriolet, in the garden of his residence in Sérignan, a very nice town in the Hérault region near Béziers. He was singing happily and whistling close to his vintage car. It was the second running and surviving example of six original vehicles. He had been pampering his star for over 30 years with the same love. That day, as a sign of good fortune, the fog lights and the reverse lights reacted—with a very bright flash to the sun’s rays. The chrome-plated and polished windscreen frames emphasised the always majestic look of the Simca<sup>1</sup> star. A beautiful American car turned so French. The white sided tyres added a touch of elegance and prosperity to this very neat setting of plains and ponds along the Languedoc coastline. This day would remain unique. As a Narcissus, Jean-Jacques lingered thoughtfully in front of the reflections and the mirror offered by all the chrome of this motorised beauty. The 50-minute ritual consisted of scrubbing the sides of the vehicle

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<sup>1</sup> Simca is an old French car brand that copied the American style. It was Ford who designed the Versailles car in 1954, then the factory was bought by Simca

once a week and attaining a pleasure that was always slow in coming, but solemn and sacred as his star reached the perfection of cleanliness. Reified purity. Jean-Jacques, lost in his happiness, was surprised to hear the harmony of the ringing of the landline telephone inside his home.

Without rushing, he put on the skates which were going to allow him to circulate on the waxed parquet floor from the entrance hallway. He passed proudly in front of the display cases of his collection of Dinky toys cars and planes, miniatures, in lead then in zamac, assiduously dusted. As he walked through the smell of polish, his eyes were on the alert for the slightest suspicious trace. Jean-Jacques's steps glided as if to better polish the floor. When he arrived in the living room, where porcelain competed with glassware and all sorts of fragile ceramics, his wife Patou, who had previously picked up the phone, handed it to him. It was at this moment that we felt a trembling of the furniture with crystal clear noises and simultaneously an enormous rumbling outside. And then, calm!

Jean-Jacques and Patou rushed outside. A cloud of dust and smoke obscured the scene for a few moments. Then, as the cloud dissipated, we discovered what the magnificent Versailles had just received by way of a passenger: an Airbus A320 landing gear coming straight from the sunny blue sky. In the fields, the sound of the Collegiate Church of Sérignan echoed.

While the couple Jean-Jacques and Patou could appear to be maniac in some respects, this appearance

became a definite reality for Captain Philippe de Chauvet. Thirty minutes earlier, he had just taken off in his Mirage 2000 from the military air base in Toulouse to identify the problem of a regular Zaragoza-Montpellier flight that was dangerously diverting to Béziers, which includes the Seveso-classified Capiscol site, a high-risk location in the city. In short, a huge danger for the whole South of France from Carcassonne to Montpellier and beyond. The air traffic controllers had tracked the flight anomaly. The alert had been given. Philippe de Chauvet had only a few minutes left to intercept the Zaragoza-Montpellier Airbus A320. His Mirage 2000 was approaching the Aude and Orb rivers, when he revisited the last few weeks spent with his partner Evelyne. Too late now to reproach himself imposing strict rules on his couple life. He demanded systematically the bed, be made perfectly, the decorative objects in their place to the millimetre etc. and with all that, he wanted to feel free with Evelyne and refuse any dependence. His household underwent fluctuations parallel to those of the changes in his behaviour: excitement and depression followed one another. His thirst freedom did not allow him to tolerate any constraint and caused him to leave Evelyne. She had taken time to understand what Philippe was suffering from. But his easy-going nature, his humour, his wit, gave him a crazy charm. Philippe fell quickly in love with his female associates. His life was full of separations, confrontations, and often ended in isolation and-great solitude. At the aircraft controls, he was fully enjoying

his freedom when he remembered that Evelyne was returning today from a holiday in Zaragoza. Mother F\*!@&\*r! She was on board the Airbus since he had to pick her up in Montpellier that afternoon.

If Philippe de Chauvet was suffering from bipolar which was considered to be mild, that of Carlos Huerva was much more serious. Schizophrenia was a chronic problem for him. He was co-pilot on board the flight Saragossa-Montpellier that same day at that same time. His mood swings were often exuberant, and his anger was too frequently out of control. He was still furious about having to leave all the passengers in Zaragoza and being ordered by the company that employed him to bring the plane back empty to repair a slight problem with the landing gear. His anger systematically turned into depression that paralysed him and harassed him with suicidal thoughts. As his captain was leaving the cabin to relieve an urgent call to urinate due to prostate problems, his evil mood, like a strange call from elsewhere, ordered him to close the access door to the cockpit. Then the madness took hold of him. In a jubilant and frenzied intoxication, he started the landing procedure and cut all communications. The Airbus began a senseless descent, a fatal chance, in the direction of the city of Béziers. Carlos changed his headset to listen to Richard Wagner's Ride of the Valkyries as he had heard and seen it in a scene from the helicopter raid in Francis Ford Coppola's film "Apocalypse Now". Then in a flash, while humming, he remembered his first glider flights at Pic Saint

Loup. At that time, he was deeply in love with Agathe. He wanted her to love him as a hero, a strong and powerful man, a god! In an attempt to seduce her, they had both flown on a biplane, a Stampe SV4, towards the Espinouse, the Caroux and the Orb Mountains, taking calculated risks. Then during a climb, they had spent the night and made love in a tent suspended from the cliff at more than 150 metres high. But Agathe had seemed indifferent to all these exploits including sexual. Carlos remembered this failure which now intensified his fury a little more. Then his excitement was transformed into a heavy depression. His wet eyelids alternated with the beginnings of sleep. While crying jerkily, he was about to fall asleep at the controls when he saw the Mirage 2000 arrive and get ostensibly closer to the A320.

When two manic-depressive or bipolar people find themselves side by side in the air, what happens? If we had had the time to ask a psychiatrist, perhaps we would have been more enlightened?

One thought he had to redeem his behaviour by saving his female companion and do his duty, and the other began to fantasize very strongly about his post-mortem fame. Then, the first thought that if he could not save Evelyn, his duty was to die with her. And then the second saw Agathe reappearing as a hiker on the towpath of the Canal du Midi. Walking poles in hand, she smiled before disappearing.

The minutes that separated them from the cataclysm were getting shorter, so Philippe de Chauvet proceeded with a first warning shot. The second one

would destroy the Airbus A320. Carlos Huerva felt the shot like a huge alarm clock. He could now take in the extent of his circumstances, and whilst swallowing his medicine, his favourite drug, a carbamazepine compound (prescribed by Dr. Viillard), he started a procedure to regain altitude and change course. Then he unlocked the door just as his commander pressed the handle and pulled up his trouser fly. Obviously, he had not noticed anything.

In doing so, during the turn, the aircraft lost one of its landing gears over Sérignan.

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