

# The Interview

The helicopter piloted by Singh has just landed on the private helipad of President *Inayik's* Guamanian residence.

"Here we are! Please follow me, professor, I'll introduce you."

Mr. Singh makes a mere hand sign as he walks past a rather relaxed-looking sentinel and enters casually through an arbor in an inviting, flowery, and shady area. The president who is sitting with a book on hand and sipping a colorful drink with ice cubes stands up and welcomes them, while casting an inquisitive glance at Singh who responds with his usual smile:

"Good day, Mr. President. This is Professor *Van den Brook*. I found him daydreaming at *Puntan Dos Amantes*."

"Good day, professor, please sit down, let's dispense with protocol, since this meeting is meant to be quite informal. I will not hold you for more than one hour or so. As for you, Mr. Singh, leave us for now and you will drive back the professor to his room at the village when we're done."

Slightly surprised, the professor takes a seat and waits patiently for his interlocutor to explain himself.

"I apologize for inviting you in this rather cavalier manner, professor, but first, I must inform you that I am not a politician, but an historian and that I was as surprised as you possibly are now when I was chosen for this position. However, it did not take me long to guess the reasons, after reading the confidential files about my predecessor to which I now have access. I also viewed the recovered video of the event you know about that probably caused you some inconvenience. History is indeed rich in teachings for those who know how to consult it and read between the lines or guess what may have been hidden. But don't hesitate to serve yourself a refreshment among what's on the table, near the door."

"Thank you, Mr. President." The professor pours himself a glass of punch and sits down, then goes on: "I will do my best to answer your questions, but I must admit that I am a little caught off guard. How can I help you?"

"I am convinced that I was chosen because former President *Tsien* was causing a problem of some sort, and probably for political reasons as well. Indeed, I am technically an American citizen (with somewhat limited rights) and I think it was felt that this would ease some possible tensions, while giving the impression that the *Eleven* show some openness to the notion of alternating their choice of leaders. There is also the fact that I am a Chamorro, native to this island."

"It turns out that our legends tell of several appearances of tricksters like this so-called Bailiff who gave you the Notice. It doesn't seem entirely in line with our *Taotao Mo'na*, but it's close, not the least because it involves a lack of respect for the territory (in this case, the planet Earth itself). I think this is true, you know, given that if sea levels continue to rise, my own country and many animal and plant species are at high risk of disappearing. As a rule, if the pattern is maintained, you will get more visitations..."

"Oddly enough, Mr. President, it was in part to escape him that I came here as a tourist... He was haunting me through nightmares..."

"Indeed? I wouldn't be surprised if it were what's taking place. Ha! Ha! Not very scientific, you might say, isn't it? I invite you to keep your mind open to what your subconscious mind is whispering into your ears. Despite your skepticism, I want to help you. I will arrange for you to be appointed as my special scientific advisor. There will be no specific task associated with this position, but it will serve as an excuse to contact me directly and confidentially. Come on! I won't hold you here any longer. I'm going to ask Singh to take you back to your accommodation at the village and I'll take care of the paperwork. Good luck, Professor!"

"Thank you, Mr. President! It's been a pleasure to meet you, regardless of the circumstances. Goodbye!"

[Back at the landing pad, Singh takes a long look at the professor and opens the cabin door without saying anything. The helicopter takes off and quickly heads towards the village, as the reddening sun continues its descent towards the sea horizon.]

At the entrance to his lodging, the professor watches Singh's car move away and ponders what this unexpected turn of events might mean. No mistake, he thinks, this could be a master trump card to use, but with caution! I must tell Sarah about this...

The next morning, after a quiet continental breakfast, the professor sits on the terrace to reflect a little on the situation, while waiting to settle his bill for the room; he also contacts the pilot who will ferry him back to the co-op. Making sure he is alone, he checks on his communicator that he is within signal range and composes a brief message for Sarah.

[Hello Sarah! I'm going back to the lab this afternoon. There is quite a bit of news, including a confirmation of the hypothesis you told me about when we had our conversation in the car. Moreover, I found some psychotherapist for my nightmares (I'll explain). We should talk. Call me tomorrow on the secure line at the same time as our last conversation. We will also take stock of the situation with respect to how things are proceeding at the workplace. Talk to you soon! AV]

Later, the professor returns to the heliport where his pilot waits for him in the canteen, sipping a soft drink.

"Hi boss! I hope this short getaway has put you back on track. A refreshment before taking-off?"

"Good idea, Bill. — Waiter? Iced tea and almond cookies, please." — "Coming!"

"So, what's new at the co-op?"

The pilot cracks a smile and says: "I think I'd better let you discover this yourself, sir." The waiter places the tea and cookies on the counter and walks away... The professor, while taking a small sip, muses on the attitude of his interlocutor... Hum! He is not very talkative; What could it be? I'd better go and investigate asap... He quickly dispatches his drink and cookies and turning toward the pilot, says:

"There's no use waiting any longer. I'd prefer to deal with the situation immediately, whatever it may be. Let's go!" The pilot sighs and slowly walks towards his aircraft, the professor in his tow...

The helicopter takes off and quickly sets sail for the habitat, while the professor, tightly buckled-up in the passenger seat, closes his eyes and tries in vain to sleep. After reaching his cruising altitude, the pilot notifies the tower that he is about to leave the coverage area and switches his dial to the approach frequency of the cooperative, which is close at hand now. He then advises the professor that he is about to land. The professor rubs his eyes and looks around a little closer, then sees the base. Suddenly he exclaims "*Hel en Verdoemenis!* So that was it..." All the antennas are retracted, except at the landing pad, and there are unequivocal signs that the colony is about to be submerged... This means that general communications are already interrupted, and bad weather is imminent. I won't even be able to notify Sarah...

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