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Fast food

**Tudor Anghelescu, 28 years old
and Mihai Melinescu, 28 years old**
Interview done by Șerban Anghelescu



The subjects of my interview, two young friends, are naturally cutting in the other's discourse. In order to preserve the fluidity of the text I will only provide the initials of the two youngsters' names, T and M, thus marking their speech. My own interventions in the text will be marked by the letter?

T.

That night we were coming from Club A and felt overjoyed. I was the happiest and far tipsier than he was. I am never violent when I've had one too many glasses, I'm calm and only waddle a little, I mean I'm not changed in any way, you can't tell that I'm drunk or anything, you have to really know that I've been drinking. My eyes are bloodshot and water a little, that's all. We got there, ordered a lot of food, heaps of it really, we sat at the table and started digging in. We were talking, can't remember what about, it must have something about one of my unhappy affairs, 'cause this is the usual conversation topic in Club A, and I was playing with the vinegar and oil bottles in their stand on the table, when, the reason escapes me, I simply poured a drop of vinegar in the pepper spoon and I even gave it a taste and liked it so, that I poured some more, and one of the ladies there saw me doing it and started yelling like a harpy "how dare you, sir"?

M.

But maybe we should mention what we were wearing at the time. You can't remember. Well, I'll tell you. I was wearing leather head to toe, including my black leather long coat, Gestapo style, and you were all leather too. We were wearing black leather top to bottom, we were basically made of leather. We were ridding out bikes and I think we had our guitars with us, too. We looked weird. And we raised the snakes. She insulted us to our face, not a respectful word came out of her mouth, said that we had to pay, that we had no shame, called us hooligans and kept yelling and screaming and cursing.

T.

I remained calm and didn't yell back at her, saying yes, madam, sorry, of course I'll pay for it, how much would that be? And she came up with this unbelievable price, 100 000 (that was the price for a really consistent meal in that fast food, n.n.) for the spoonful of pepper in the bottle stand. I took out a hundred-thousand bill from my wallet, gave it to Mihai and said "go and pay for the pepper". And he goes, pays and I say: where's the receipt for the 100 000 that you paid?

M.

It was 50. 000.

T.

It was a hundred, I've got the receipt at home. It was huge, anyway.

M.

Then I went back. He was cool as a cucumber but very silent, while the women were all climbing the walls, real madness it was. It was pretty late, I was of course having a good time, I was a little tipsy, so you can picture the pretty mess the whole thing was. I was cast as the advocate. Taking my part really seriously, I said: "We've messed things up and are willing to pay for it! Please give me a receipt." What happened next? She wrote the sum on a receipt, on a regular cash receipt, a slip of paper really. O.K. ... and I went back to our table to finish my dinner.

T.

Mel, you've got it all wrong! This is what happened... Before getting any kind of cash receipt

I went to the cash register too, right after you had asked for a receipt and got nothing, and told them: "Give me a receipt, man!" My voice was tough and dry, rather than violent. They said they wouldn't and then I leaned over the cash register, took the key and said that I would give it back only if I got either my receipt or my money back. You can't basically sell something without giving me the receipt, and I won't pay for something I don't get. And then, the first thing they did was to call the public guards. One of the women phoned a guy she called by name and told him: "Man, come quickly 'cause I'm in serious trouble over here", and stuff ... She hit the panic button, dude.

Then they started pouring in, one squad of guys in black after another, and then the police followed. The first ones that arrived were really cool. The women were climbing the walls, I tell you. They asked us to step out of the fast-food restaurant. We did, and I told the guy who looked in charge: "Chief", I say, "the deal is that we got in, had our dinner, spoiled a spoonful of pepper, paid for it, and now I want my receipt. But she won't give it to me, I want my money back." The guy talked to one of the women and then I got a scrap of paper on which the woman had written the sum. I started laughing, obviously, and I said I wanted a cash receipt. I gave the scrap of paper back. The women were hysterical. When I took away their key they got violent, they hit me even, but I didn't feel a thing. The cops came. The first ones had left saying: "Please don't go back in there!" I said: "I won't leave until they've given me the receipt, so here I am." "Come in the morning and talk it over with the manager." I said: "I don't want to talk to the manager. I want the receipt or my money back."

The first police car came right away but left quickly. They took down our names, we gave a short version of what had happened, but they didn't write a report or something like that. They told us to leave and to talk to the manag-



er the morning after, and they went away soon after. We weren't very convinced, tough. I said: "I'm not going anywhere, man, until they've given me the receipt!"

They called the second police car when they noticed that I was going to go back inside. The guys in the second car were much tougher and really pissed us off, Mihai and me, 'cause we can't stand being bullied by the police, and so I started shouting at them and telling them in a really annoyed voice this time: "Look here, I was sold a thing, doesn't matter what, a spoonful of pepper at an outrageous price, and got not receipt for it!" And the cop answered right back saying: "Right, she can't sell without giving you a receipt." And I say: "Well then, she has to give me the receipt!" On the other hand, the dame says: "Where am I supposed to get a pepper receipt? There's no such thing." - "Well, then why did you ask for money?" The cop says: "Yes, sir, you're right, you go ahead and press charges." - And I say: "Where am I supposed to do that?" - "At the precinct." - "But you are from the precinct, you take down our complaint." - "No, you come to the precinct at 8 tomorrow morning." That got on my nerves. I say: "Man, you're a cop, make her give me the money back or a receipt for it!" And I kept saying that until one of them, the chief, I guess, started being rude. And there followed the usual conversation between the police and the ordinary citizen ... "Are you making fun of me now?" - "No, officer, you're making fun of me!" - "And who exactly do you think you are?" - "And you, who do you think you are?"

When I asked the first cop for his name, he locked himself up inside the car. The chief, an older man, noticed that I was pissed and was heading in his direction holding my phone, on which I only meant to take down his name. I sent messages to the precinct in order to write down his name; I was angry with him and thought that I would after all make an effort and wake up at 8 the next morning and I would go to the precinct to press charges. But he locked him-

self up inside the car and, when he saw me coming closer, he blocked the door as if he was afraid I would force myself in or something. He sat there, hands on the steering wheel.

?

Forgive my interruption, but this brings to mind something that happened in front of the Academy building. It was back in the 90s and I was just getting inside the Academy building to read something. There was a great commotion in front of the main gates on Calea Victoriei, as Iliescu was expected to arrive soon (the President, n.n.). The place was packed with guards and men in black suits who kept their eyes on the entrance where a policeman in uniform and two huge bodyguards, as sharply dressed as you would expect, were standing. One of them asks for my I.D. I look back at him and ask: "Do you have an I.D.? Show it to me." They kept a spiteful silence, give me a hair-raising look and refused to show me any I.D. They were obviously from the Guard and Protection Service, but wouldn't show me as much as a fake I.D. I think they must have had loads of them, but they just wouldn't take out one, although they were supposed to present one if asked for it. In the end I told him the following: "Look here, I haven't a clue who you are, but I see here a police officer who looks like a nice man, wears a uniform too and I don't suspect him of having stolen it ... See, I'll show my I.D. to him." I took out my library card and I went inside. They are probably trained to keep the secret.

T.

... Well, now ... the whole thing cooled off, meaning that I got no receipt, the women were still yelling, the third police special squad was already there, and in the end we left, the money stayed there and we told to ourselves that we would come back in the morning. The next day I got up at 6 in the evening. I never set foot in there again.

M.

I went back there once, alright. I said to myself: let's go, I was with a friend at the time, coming from a pub, the Music Club, and felt like getting something to eat. He says: "Let's go to Împinge Tava¹, dude! Come on, come on ...". And I say that I don't feel like it. In the end we went...

They brought us the order and you go figure out the scandal that broke up again. A youngster goes ballistic 'cause they brought him too few French fries; another youngster tells him: be polite, dude, the ladies have been up and about for hours. And they almost started a fight and I was laughing my head off 'cause things like those seemed to happen whenever I was around the place. And these guys did more than pick up a fight, they kicked up the counters, toppled the tables, broke the windows, a might fine mess, I tell you. The women seemed less inclined to climb the walls and less scared than they were

when we caused trouble. At a certain moment, as I turned around to ask my friend: "Ion, what should we do now, man: leave or stick around?" - we were sitting away from the fight - , hardly had I managed to pick up what was going on when I suddenly saw that people were leaving. And off they went. Both parties. Five minutes later we were having our dinner in peace when the Bidepa guys (a quick-intervention private service) showed up. I thought that was very funny, the irony of it all. We hadn't done anything wrong and they had got there in a matter of seconds. And now, a good 10 minutes after something that might have posed a real threat on those women had happened, the bodyguards came to the rescue.

Translated by Alina Popescu

¹ A fast-food restaurant.