

THE MAN WHO CONQUERED HIMSELF

To prevent him from rising from the ashes and returning to his old ways, I will not mention the protagonist's first and last name. I will simply use the letter V to refer to him. I will take a journey through the different stages of his life so that the reader can more accurately understand the evolution of this character.

CHILDHOOD

V was born neither fat nor thin, neither blond nor brunette, neither tall nor short. He didn't stand out in any way, as he probably would have liked, judging by how his life unfolded. In any case, he couldn't be categorized as an average baby, since his cranial diameter was somewhat above average. His mother didn't have a very easy time during childbirth. The newborn, no sooner had he emerged from the vagina with the help of forceps, insisted on returning to his previous state. Some of his biographers maintain that this may have been because, after the chop on his bottom, he began to cry, but the commotion around him prevented anyone from paying attention to him, and this, it seems, he could not tolerate. As the firstborn son of an upper-middle-class family, he always had hired professionals who were very attentive to his needs. His parents barely had time to attend to their offspring's demands. So he grew up with somewhat weakened attachment figures and, therefore, without the necessary emotional support. Toys everywhere, every variety of food imaginable, wardrobes overflowing with clothes and shoes. Since he had no restrictions in sight, he was a spoiled child, but, on the other hand, being able to choose from a multitude of options created a certain insecurity that, in turn, led him to change his mind quite frequently.

When he was almost three and a half, twins were born. One died a few days later, the other survived. Now there were two of them; he had a competitor with whom to vie for the constant attention of the staff and for the brief moments his parents dedicated to them.

The competition was nonexistent. From the very beginning, the new tenant knew his role: to subordinate himself, for his own good, to V's wishes and desires. Moreover, with his submissive attitude, he had the advantage that his older brother cared for his well-being, since he posed no threat to his privileged status and, therefore, was not considered an enemy.

The behavior displayed at home continued, with some adjustments, at school. In this environment, V, especially from the second grade onward, was aware that he had a few classmates who would support his actions when the teachers were not present. If he laughed at a classmate because she wore glasses, if he insulted someone because he didn't like them, if he hid the chalk from the blackboard, if he threw a classmate's books and notebooks on the floor, they would do the same, but with more scorn for the victim.

ADOLESCENCE AND YOUTH

V became infatuated with a brunette in his class when he was fourteen. It was unrequited love, despite his continuous attempts to get closer to her. In the end, as his advances were thwarted, he ended up hating her. The girl suffered his revenge for the rest of the school year. However, she was lucky because, the following year, our protagonist tried to win over another classmate and, along with his clique, stopped bothering the previous one. The reader will notice that I'm not talking about infatuation, but about possession. When she refused to be possessed, the actions they carried out against this last girl were so ruthless that she attempted suicide. Following this incident, the family filed complaints about such brutal and prolonged harassment. The power of V's family was clearly demonstrated in the solution adopted: the victim had to change schools, and the boy didn't even suffer a temporary expulsion.

The young man's narcissism, over the years, showed an almost geometric progression. His vanity knew no bounds. Everyone else was just part of the scenery; he was the center of attention.

ADULTHOOD

V first worked as head of the sales department of a large arms company where the family was the majority shareholder, and later became its president. He increased the family's investments in various economic sectors, had serious problems with the tax authorities, but, since he employed the best law firm in the country, he emerged unscathed from almost all of them.

His brother, who had focused his professional vocation on the military, after a long period of training and several years participating in the continuous international conflicts in which his powerful nation was involved, rose through the ranks to become a high-ranking officer in the armed forces. He died in a plane crash at the age of fifty-two.

OLD AGE

V was among the wealthiest people in the world. He had amassed an immense fortune. Yet he still craved more power. He had succeeded in everything he had set out to do. He, and he alone, deserved to be the greatest.

He ran for president. He invested a portion of his wealth in the campaign. After a long campaign, his party won the most seats. One of his promises was to stop the flow of migrants trying to enter the country. Many of the large number of immigrants who had already been living there for some time voted for him because they thought this would make them safer and give them more opportunities for work and prosperity. Nothing could have been further from the truth. As soon as he came to power, without even bothering to consult with members of Congress and the Senate, he ordered the evacuation of thousands upon thousands of these people, who were sent back to their countries of origin if those countries had agreed to take them in. If they refused, they were sent to prisons in a nearby country, where those prisoners who managed to survive did so in inhuman conditions.

Acting solely on his desires and, once again, disregarding the nation's representative bodies, he embarked on a campaign of intervention in foreign countries. His aim was to secure a privileged position within the global geopolitical structure. With the aid of his immense military power, he kidnapped the leaders who governed these countries and appointed others who were obligated to follow the directives dictated by his government. He offered sums of money to acquire parts of other nations, and if they refused, he subjected their populations to harsh military punishment. International laws, approved by consensus, became meaningless.

No one could stand against him. He was the master of the world. His egomania reached such a peak that in interviews and rallies he asserted that he had come into the world by divine mandate. At one point, he even came to believe he was God himself. He had seized everything he had coveted and longed for. The only thing left for him to possess was himself.

After consulting with the members of his government, who, driven by self-preservation, merely nodded and reaffirmed his arguments, he decided that only in eternity could he achieve the ultimate conquest of himself. The idea took root in his Machiavellian mind that he would only have one attempt to accomplish this goal. If he failed, he would

never be able to master himself. And this would have catastrophic consequences for him and for the world, for which he had fought so hard. So...

Dear reader, choose an ending.

FIRST ENDING

He went down to the garage of his mansion, closed the windows tightly, started the three cars he owned that were parked there, sat on the floor with his back against the wall, and waited, with a copy of his recently published biography, for the sweet end.

SECOND ENDING

Death by carbon monoxide inhalation didn't occur for lack of time. He heard a loud explosion just as he had opened the book. A state-of-the-art ultrasonic missile had struck his sumptuous residence. He didn't care that the soldiers surrounding him threw his biography into the fire; however, he was very saddened because his dogs' entrails had been splattered. He ended his days in a maximum-security prison.

THIRD ENDING

His biography was never published. He went out into the garden with a remote-controlled explosive in his hand. He pressed "on" and threw it upwards. At the last moment, he wanted to change his mind; He no longer cared about eternity or conquering himself. He ran like a bat out of hell, but it was too late; the device pursued him until it found him dead. After the explosion, V, exhausted from the effort, could only manage to murmur: "Ouch!"

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