

## You Want Me to Confess to Who I Was Twenty Years Ago?

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What did you do during the Velvet Revolution and later in the year 1989?

You got me. You want me to confess to what I did, who I was twenty years ago?

Terrible. All right. I was twenty nine, I was married and I had one seriously ill child. I had a job as a dramaturgist in the Puppet Theater in Banská Bystrica, but at that time I was on a maternity leave while all the time my spirit was in the theater. I was brought up in a socialist regime; I took it as something normal. I lived in a family of an active communist and a mother who hated the church and scolded my father for being in the Party. In the first days I remember a phone call with the then director of the theater, he called me to ask me what was going on and to tell me not to make any trouble with the actresses from the ensemble. I would swear nobody was making any trouble. Ivetka, there will be consequences – this much I remember from that phone call which was relatively normal. Nothing extreme. Or am I deceiving myself? After that phone call I was alarmed. I realized that what was going on is not regular but exceptional. It only wasn't clear how it was going to end up.

In Banská Bystrica it was snowing almost all November – I know it just because I would go to meeting with a stroller. It had problems to steer it. I would dress my son Mišo in warm clothes and push the stroller up the hill of the main square. By myself. With a one-year-old son. He was what interested me most in the whole world; we had shortly returned from a hospital and were waiting for his results to tell us whether the surgery had been successful. My college mate from the Academy of Performing Arts Maroš Krajčovič was standing on a rostrum in the square giving a speech. People were chanting. My son was sleeping. Even the chanting and cheering did not wake him. I would be watching him from the corner of my eye while looking for my friends from the theater. I wanted to belong somewhere. Only now do I realize – where was my then husband? Where did he disappear? How come he wasn't there with me? At that time we didn't know it was not going to end up well between us. Or am I lying again? What were my parents doing? I don't know. How did my father – a long-term Party member – take it? I don't know. I know that long after November my mother would still mock him – see, what were those red books of yours good for?! I don't know anything about my nine years younger brother. Where was he at that time? What was he doing? I know that my – at that time – young friends were all there cheering enthusiastically. At night they drove to Prague to experience what was going on there. In an exalted manner they referred about the strike of theaters. My then colleague, nowadays my husband, was happy – you see I was right?! For a long time he would be explaining to me to wake up and realize what state we were living in, and why communist had been such swines. And what totalitarianism was about. Maybe he never repeated those lectures; liberal-minded lectures to a married women,

mother with a baby in a stroller somewhere on walks in parks, about how history was rolling and turning.

At first, my theater friend had a political and civic head start. Unfortunately, at the beginning I did not realize anything. I remember also one moment from the theater when we traveled to a festival in France and the ensemble told me that our director could not go with us. Because he was a communist cadre. I was supposed to tell him that. So I told him – in a normal fashion; maybe I'm lying again. I know he wasn't happy to hear it, it was unpleasant even for me, but in the end he didn't go with us. Naturally? In 1990, I for the first time traveled to the West and didn't understand those economic and social differences. I was shocked. A Frenchman who invited us asked whether I was not going to be offended if he bought my son a pair of socks. I was offended. In Paris I found out that in spite of years of learning French I couldn't speak it at all. I was flooded with feelings of inferiority which I still feel to these days when looking at the rich West, and its cultural opportunities. The complex of linguistic and national inferiority.

Only later, at the end of the 1990s, did I realize the importance of the Velvet Revolution. I got divorced and had my second child – a daughter. After years of groping I came across the *Aspekt* magazine. I know that the Velvet Revolution belonged to men – thanks to this fact, and for the needs of patriarchy, I raised one of them; nowadays he is twenty-one and he sneers at Christmas. In spite of the fact that he is a child of the Revolution and he should be happy, he is dissatisfied and he ran away to Bohemia. I know that for him and my daughter the Revolution did not mean anything fatal. For me it does. Is it generational? Or is this age discrimination at work? For me, November was about unlocking of closed doors that had been stifling and mortifying our problems. They gradually keep jumping before us bringing a lot of evil that has been hidden of unnamed. I'm grateful to November for changing my life and the life of my children even though I have realized and experienced a lot of negative things. Thanks to November nothing is as it used to. That's good. The Revolution of women is till to come, ladies. The language of men controls us, even today. Are we ready for other options?

Translated by **Eva Riečanská**

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