

## Excruciating in the Languedoc

*This is an extract from “Excruciating Experiences” from my memoir dialogues. I am in conversation with my doctor who also acts as my therapist in time of need, most of the time.*

**Doc:** It’s good to tell something that’s bothering or nagging, to let it out. I know it can be an effort but that very exercise of putting it into words is the thing – we call it catharsis.

**Tee:** Mmmm, catharsis sounds a bit much for me, too much like letting it all hang out, coming clean, adding to all the embarrassments that you’ve experienced, that you’re supposed to be dispelling.

**Doc:** But this is engineered disclosure, not something that you’re going to wish didn’t happen.

**Tee:** I wouldn’t bet on it, doc. But let’s see, I can dredge something up, just off the top of my memory ... how about something to do with an electric drill? Or a chainsaw? Can do both.

**Doc:** I think I’d prefer the drill, thanks.

**Tee:** Reminds me of a dentist. You’re sure now? Life in my hands? Your starter for ten? Double your money? Are you nervous?

**Doc:** Oh, for heaven’s sake! Just get on with it!

**Tee:** Most people going to the South of France have happy memories. I lived there once in the Languedoc, had a great time, but funny how one awful experience can keep buzzing away in the old mind.

**Doc:** To your tale, please!

**Tee:** One day of intense heat in the aforesaid region of the South of France I was doing some work in the bathroom of a small old vigneron’s house ... that’s ancient house, not aged vigneron, although previous owners probably had been quite elderly ... anyway, there I was with my electric drill putting holes in the stonework, rather concrete I should say ... the house was made of stone but the ensuite was a later addition ... the holes were to put screws into. Well, rather I should say to put the plastic holder things in first, no idea what the English word is but I know the French word ... <une douille> ... anyway the screw goes in after and the whole thing tightens up inside ... but that’s not the point really ... I was putting up a corner shelf in the bathroom ...

**Doc:** Something of an aside, I should say. One could say a filler perhaps, while you gather your thoughts.

**Tee:** Very good and kind. Anyway, it was time for a coffee, so I put down the drill, went out to make make and drink it taking some 10 minutes or so, came back, picked up the drill ... which was still connected. Somehow I picked it up with the drill bit facing my body, and my thumb managed to press the starter button kicking it into life; this kind of unintentional starting of a machine can mean that it's not pointed at the object of its work. In this instance it certainly wasn't pointing at the wall. I was so shocked at the unexpected helluva sound I didn't put two and two together for at least five seconds – OK, make that three – by which time the furiously turning drill had caught in my flimsy nylon shorts and twisted them rapidly in a terrible turbulence. All I could think was, as you can well imagine: “Oh, my valuables!” or maybe it was, “Oh, my goolies!” ... anyway, the same things were certainly in danger ... I waited for the excruciating pain which would be the end of widdling or weeing as I knew it, the start of wearing special bags for the collection of waste water. Not that I really thought all that at all, mainly just “Here comes the pain.”

**Doc:** ( *Holding himself between the legs* ) Go on, man! Go on! I am feeling for you.

**Tee:** Steady on! You're supposed to remain a calm listener.

**Doc:** You've really got me!

**Tee:** Cue for a song? ( *Doc looks reproachful.* ) OK, later perhaps. Luckily – <heureusement> I could have said at that time in that place – I collected my thoughts and released my thumb from the button. It took a while to recover; all I could think of was what a close thing and what on earth I would have done had my tinkle got turboed in my clothing, and I was left with a huge weighty power drill device hanging from my hosepipe.

**Doc:** I can feel the stretching sensation ...

**Tee:** Later in a moment of calm, I wondered if I'd have been able to drive to a hospital, how I would have got down the stairs, what it would have been like getting into the car, what I would have said at the hospital ...

**Doc:** The French for willie, that kind of thing?

**Tee:** Yes, possibly, and the embarrassment of the telling, could I have explained things without actually having to flop out what was left of my mangled member. Anyway, I made a mental note never again to pick up the drill without thinking, to make sure that the drill is facing away, my fingers well away from the switch and the power off – basic precautions but so easily forgotten.

**Doc:** Did you think about the kind of clothing you were wearing? Perhaps a mental note to wear something more suited to the dangers of power drilling? Certainly something to protect your pecker.

**Tee:** Yes, yes, very good. You are <mort droit> there, sir. Mind you, I was dressed for the weather, it was 35 degrees and climbing, being high summer. They call it <la canicule>, a period of intense heat – the word sounds a bit paradoxical. Anyway, I've got photos ...

**Doc:** Good lord, man, you took photos ...

**Tee:** No, no, don't worry, not of my nearly-amputated pecker! Just the torn clothing and the position of the drill.

**Doc:** How could you possibly think I was thinking a photo of your phallus, something you would only have done if it had been mutilated?

**Tee:** Mmmm, I'll have to think about that one.

**Photo 1 of 2 following:**



**Photo 1:** *It wasn't so much the drill going to my groin as the drill catching up the clothing and going to my groin! In this restaging of the awful event my T-shirt is from Brian Wilson's "Smile" concert ... I can assure you at the time there was no smiling, only jaw-tightening and teeth bearing as I thought of what could have happened.*



**Photo 2:** *The original clothing worn at the time of the “turbulence”.*

**Doc:** All right, I must say you’re off to a good start with excruciations in your life but I wonder if we could get a little more embarrassment or regret, and less of the physical. It would save me clutching at my person in empathy as I imagine the awfulness of potential pain.

**Tee:** Well, I may be clutching at straws ... but I’ll just have to keep going with the memories as they occur to me, not sure that I want to grade or filter them. There must be psychotherapeutical brownie points for letting the memories come up and telling without let or hindrance, without selecting or embellishing ...

**Doc:** Except when you’re actually *writing* your memoirs, of course.

**Tee:** Naturally, then there’s the greatest care with embroidering and embellishing; wouldn’t be such wonderful memories otherwise.

**Doc:** The truth doesn’t matter too much.

**Tee:** It’s what a person chooses to say that counts, an attempt to make the unconscious conscious.

**Doc:** Get on with it! But not the chainsaw experience!