

Captions:

STÉPHANE, a shooting star

Photographic essay by

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Photo 01 -

Life on the street, but not without the alcohol.

He speaks to me of his town and of a place he likes, abandoned greenhouses where once he spent winter. This would be the starting point.



Photo 02 -

First shots.

« We went into the greenhouses to take some photos, we had a great time because Michel is a great guy and we get on well together!! »



Photos 03 - 04 -

« It reminds me of school, a long time ago, when we made an illustrated novel with my friends ».



Photos 05 - 06 -

He trusts me enough to show me his town, the places he likes to go (the lake) but also the places to which he retreats to shelter.



Photos 07 - 08 -

Squats: being housed or going homeless.

« It is the beginning of September, time goes by so quickly...I don't want to spend another Winter like last year!!! »



Photos 09 - 10 -

An accident in life.

He suffers from amnesia but remembers waking up in a hospital bed with head injuries after a coma of several days. It was shortly after the death of his wife, at the end of a period of lonely distress and of alcohol abuse. No witnesses of his accident? Of his fall? Nor of the attack on him?! All that remains are the neurological sequels and his unanswered questions.

« I have to go back to living the way I was before my wife died, before my mental breakdown, my fractures and the ensuing operation... »

« I really must get myself back on the straight and narrow, this has been going on too long!!! »

« I think the fact that I'm writing about all this forces me to hold on!!! »

« Keep the faith and stay strong ».



Photo 11 -

Running away as a solution to problems.

Little by little he talks of his irrepressible urge to change everything : concerning employment, he spent his time going from one short-term telecoms contract to another (installing relay transmitters for mobile phones) until no one called on him anymore. Then he was a barman, and after that an oyster merchant, until the accident happened. As for changing his life, he headed off a lot to Africa, then to Brittany, whenever a relationship broke up. That disturbed him to the extent that he finally came back to live in the town where he grew up (for practical reasons, as he knows the place well, and also because the locals know him and he feels protected)



Photo 12 -

Putting up with the group whose company he needs...

Living in a group is complicated but altogether necessary!

« *The more time goes on, the more hassle it is, we're always arguing over silly things* »

« *And then I can't keep my big mouth shut, when they take the piss, like this afternoon with the lads. The worst thing is that they couldn't stop laughing.....well, happily, a good relaxing game of bowls together cheered me up* »

But a little further on, he writes:

« *I like being alone in the squat because it allows me to think, I sleep better, I feel better* ».

« *I get led on by the group, because we idle the time away sharing cigarettes and beer. But cutting my links with them means cutting myself off from their company and their solidarity.*



Photos 13 - 14

Memories, Saudade... Lone dreams under the stars

« *Even if today, like it is often the case, you're feeling down, think about tomorrow and your son, who you have to see again!!!* »

« *Everything depends on your attitude and what you are going to do!* »



Photo 15 -

Mourning the old life.

« People tell me that I've been mourning too long and they note that I'm still wearing my wedding ring. Mourning also the body that I had as a young man, I was a cycling champion and swimming instructor. I was young and good-looking and then fate happened to change all that. Mourning my brain, I suffer from amnesia because of the head injuries».



Photos 16 - 17

Getting by... in the squat. The world after six beers

Alcohol-and-cigarettessssss

“A further reduction today in my consumption of beer. I take the green ones, they're not so strong.” « I'm can tell you that I didn't drink any beer today and only two yesterday. To manage to do that, I didn't go to see the others. As it happens, drinking much less helps me to imagine a future.”



Photos 18 - 19

The son (who he hasn't seen for two years)

« I have to stop living like this, I really miss my son!!! »

« I'm always thinking about my son because I miss him and I think the way I am causes problems for him.”

Promises made to himself. The dream.

« I really wish that everything would sort itself out and that I could live like I want to! »

« Things are the way they are, but it is up to me to sort myself out, to pick myself up and to get on with life! »



Photo 20 -
Reality. Help and hassle.

His father

« *I'm seeing my father at half one, and I'd like to iron out my current problems. As for my financial situation, I've asking him to send me a bank draft. He'll do it tomorrow morning. »*

The institutions

« *Tomorrow is Sunday, so I have to wait another day before going to see the social worker.*

The son

« *I'm writing a draft letter for my son which I'll send when I have some money! »*

Positive thoughts to keep his spirits up....spread through his diaries like pearls. .

« *All this has really been going on long enough!!! »*

« *I repeat, strike while the iron is hot! »*

« *Hang on, don't give up! »*

« *Get back on your feet, Stéphane, 'cos the future really depends on it!!! »*

« *Stay motivated, because if you don't, none of this is worth it and you know it »*



Photo 21 -

The complexity of the character himself: fragility, manipulation, actor.

« *Begging and being homeless is possible only with the help of others. »*

« *How can you get that sort of help without getting into a sort of routine alternating seduction and having people take pity on you.....or maybe finding a balance between the two. »*

Its like as if he's an actor...

Maybe that explains why Stéphane is so good in front of the lens.

« *Do you think its possible for me to go forward smiling, without being tripped up by my character?*

»



Photo 22-

« *After the chat yesterday with Michel, I see everything differently»*

« *May the future come! »*



Photo 23-

A certain elegance

« I did some washing two days ago and changed my clothes. It did me a lot of good!!!»



Photo 24 -

Studio actor.

«He showed me some photos and even if I don't like my face too much, I'm pleasantly surprised, I'm delighted that he's going to give me the prints».



These photos were taken between the beginning of September and the end of October 2011

Two months later, his mobile rang out. I kept trying, and finally was surprised that it was Stéphane's father who answered.

« if you're looking for him... he's gone »

I met Stéphane's father and son to hand them the photos. I learned that Stéphane had managed to meet up with his son for a few days towards the end of 2011, just before he died.