

On what is offered, by M*I*n K*nder*

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Abstract. I distinguish two senses of the word “offer.” I do so within a brief pastiche, which I put down to the influence of the European Union.

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Hugo has invited Tamina back to his apartment. He has made her an offer: he is offering her the best night of her life. But let’s not get carried away with excitement. Even a novelist must clarify their terms. What does Hugo offer? When I contemplated the question, two definitions occurred to me.

- (a) The offer is within Hugo’s words. We look into those words and we know: Hugo is offering Tamina the best night of her life. For some reason, I compare it to opening a coffin and peering inside at a corpse.
- (b) The offer is what Hugo will actually provide. It is what the fellow, with his bad teeth, is actually able and willing to offer. It is a night in his apartment, certainly not the best night, but also not the worst.

Worse, much worse: back in her homeland, Tamina is hiding from the police in a closet. A neighbour has reported that she left the house twice yesterday. The police want to know if she had a certificate for that. In the closet, she holds onto a piece of paper but it is actually a love letter. Tamina cannot read the letter in the dark. She feels a sensation of warmth and loses a button.

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Noise from the apartment above is spoiling their date. A popular song called Blurred Lines is playing. A little girl is dancing to it. She seems to me as if she stepped out of one of Papa's art history books, but here she is: a child interpreting sexiness, to a mindless rhythm. An ostrich too is dancing to it. Each is so preoccupied with their own dance moves that neither notices the other.

Reference

Kundera, M. (translated from French by A. Asher) 1996. *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*. London: Faber and Faber.