

Eekhoornbrood

Pieter De Buysser

Marie-Jeanne: Perhaps I should take your jacket.

Moassi: In case I was a big shot.

Marie-Jeanne: You are big. Very big. And your jaws.

Moassi: Shall I close the door?

Marie-Jeanne: I don't think I'll need to go out anymore.

Moassi: We might as well sleep here tonight. And then, tomorrow we'll see further.

Marie-Jeanne: May I touch your face?

Moassi: Yes.

Marie-Jeanne: Maybe you'd first like to sit down. We've walked a lot today.

Moassi: I'm still in good condition.

Marie-Jeanne: May I touch your face then?

Moassi: I'd like, if you don't mind, to take my shoes off.

Marie-Jeanne: Yes yes, me too.

Moassi: Paris!

Marie-Jeanne: Who would have thought it? This morning still in the Aldi in Kortessem and now here already with you.

Moassi: Did you go shopping this morning?

Marie-Jeanne: Yes, so did you.

Moassi: No, not me. I'd been preparing already for a few days. I didn't know exactly when I'd leave, but I knew that I would.

Marie-Jeanne: For me it was exactly the same.

Moassi: Really?

Marie-Jeanne: Yes, really, in the last few days I've just wanted to throw it. To the outside. To nowhere, over there.

Moassi: Where are we heading?

Marie-Jeanne: No idea.

Moassi: Me neither. It's as if my blood wanted to reorder the path my veins take.

Marie-Jeanne: You're beautiful.

Moassi: As if I'd already been saturated with a scent that was still yet to come.

Marie-Jeanne: I saw you again this morning in the Aldi, near the dairy products, and then, and then.. and then it just popped out.

Moassi: But this morning I wasn't in the Aldi.

Marie-Jeanne: Well you don't have to be ashamed of it, I shop there, too...

Moassi: I swear to you, I didn't go to the Aldi.

Marie-Jeanne: (*laughs*) You lie!

Moassi: No, early this morning I left to get my work clothes from my locker in the garage, and then I went to the laundromat, and I stayed there until noon almost.

Marie-Jeanne: But no, by the dairy products, after that you bought Kool-Aid, two bottles, peach flavoured.

Moassi: I haven't any children and I wasn't there.

Marie-Jeanne: But I...

Moassi: I'm sorry.

Marie-Jeanne: Why have you followed me then?

Moassi: Your eyes.

Marie-Jeanne: Is there something with my eyes?

Moassi: Something with soft burbles and sweet water.

Marie-Jeanne: Are you chattering or flattering me?

Moassi: I think there's trout in there, as well.

Marie-Jeanne: Ah.

Moassi: I thought so the first time I saw you on Evertse highway, you were standing next to your bike waiting to cross and you wanted to tie your shoe, but this wasn't easy because you had to hold your bike. I crossed over and I saw you having a most stubborn pleasure in that impossible situation. You went down to your knee and then you merrily placed your other leg through the bike frame. All the people standing round saw that something atrocious was about to happen, but when I saw your eyes, twinkling in that proud self-depreciation, and then your legs, with a circus animal's elegance, then..

Marie-Jeanne: Then you carried on?

Moassi: No no, then I followed you.

Marie-Jeanne: Ah?

Moassi: Yes yes, then I followed you.

Marie-Jeanne: For how long?

Moassi: Until the Gap Street.

Marie-Jeanne: All the way to the Gap Street.

Moassi: Yes.

(Silence.)

Marie-Jeanne: We can talk quite well with one another, don't you think?

Moassi: Yes yes, the best.

Marie-Jeanne: We didn't need to wait so long. On the train this afternoon from Kortessem to Brussels, not a word, oh my, I can tell you I felt it in my belly.

Moassi: Yes, and why was that actually?

Marie-Jeanne: But I liked it! That's the itch you get when you're standing high up and you're about to leap into the swimming pool.

Moassi: Should we stop talking then?

Marie-Jeanne: In the train from Brussels to Paris, my mouth was a tomb of marble.

Moassi: Unimaginable. The most out of the outer. From that moment, it was clear that we were travelling together.

Marie-Jeanne: You mean that you were following me.

Moassi: Or you me. From the moment we were sitting across from one another this afternoon on the train, I've been wanting to ask you: what were you thinking when you came out yesterday and saw the drawing in the sand that I made for you, which covered the length of the entire street?

Marie-Jeanne: I don't think I saw it.

Moassi: Didn't see it?

Marie-Jeanne: No.

Moassi: I drew an entire rebus. With an invitation in there... didn't see it? How come you followed me then?

Marie-Jeanne: Because I wanted to.

Moassi: Not because... but why then?

Marie-Jeanne: Because I find you so beautiful. I think that I find you the most beautiful of anything I've ever seen before.

Moassi: You're crazy, you don't know me. And you come to a hotel room in Paris with a complete stranger. And tomorrow, what are you going to do tomorrow?

Marie-Jeanne: Be with you.

Moassi: Aren't you disappointed now that you hear my voice?

Marie-Jeanne: No, absolutely not. And you speak a good English.

Moassi: This afternoon when we were standing at the ticket window in Brussels and you turned away, wasn't that to protect yourself from being let down?

Marie-Jeanne: No, so quiet, that was just fine. We had just arrived in Brussels, we were together for a half an hour and that sign with all its blinking destinations, we allowed it to hypnotise us, we two next to each other, shoulder by shoulder, until we were two long lovely cranes, swaying over a shipyard. Every now and then I shifted my weight, just a little to my left leg, so that my shoulder could touch yours.

Moassi: And that happened.

Marie-Jeanne: You felt it, no?

Moassi: Yes, of course.

Marie-Jeanne: I wanted to touch you but I didn't want to destroy anything.

Moassi: And now, are we now destroying everything by speaking?

(Silence.)

Moassi: Maybe we should stop talking.

Marie-Jeanne: Are you tired?

Moassi: Not really. You?

Marie-Jeanne: A little bit. It comes.

Moassi: Which bed would you like?

Marie-Jeanne: Ah, so I can make a choice here. These French. Such a reputation and then you go into one of their tiny little rooms and the beds are standing two meters apart from one another. I'll take this one.

Moassi: Care for a sip of water?

Marie-Jeanne: Yes, please.

Moassi: Goodnight.

Marie-Jeanne: Goodnight.

(It is dark, quiet. They lie in bed.)

Marie-Jeanne: Forgive me. Um. Would you mind excusing me a moment?

Moassi: Yes?

Marie-Jeanne: I don't know your name yet.

Moassi: It's true, that we haven't said that to each other.

Marie-Jeanne: Maybe it's better that way.

Moassi: Yes. Without names.

Marie-Jeanne: Or with different ones.

Moassi: I'd find it a relief to have a new name.

Marie-Jeanne: You, too? For me, really, me too. That you start again. From now on a different name. That would be marvellous if everyone would just go along with it.

Moassi: But also treason. I'd then be insulting the life I've had for nearly half a century under my own name. My name is Moassi.

Marie-Jeanne: I'm Marie-Jeanne. Flowers don't exactly spring out of there with that one. Marie-Jeanne Daems. Doesn't that say anything to you? Daems? The Daems family from Limburg? Rik Daems? In fact you should say Hendrik. He was a member of the prime minister's cabinet. He lives in a really beautiful house with his wife, I've seen photos of it. That's family.

Moassi: Maybe easier to accept your name then?

Marie-Jeanne: I've never seen him, only when I was a little snout nose, he was twelve and was already sporting a peach-fuzz moustache at a first communion in 1972. And there was terrific gossip about his house, that it would be too big for him. But then I thought, now how can a house be too big? I don't get it.

Moassi: Maybe the house is too big, if you can't get it.

Marie-Jeanne: But I might be able to get it, really, if only I could get it. I've noticed one thing though: my head is too small. I'd actually like to break my head open with a piece of iron, or a can opener, or to peel it into a long stream like the contests where Russian women take a potato and turn the skin into a trail of one and a half meters. All that air loosening up and bounding about! And then I'd gut the potato as well. A head, a head wear everything can move into, and everything, like this, go out from again, a permeable head, space, gust of wind, a head that is everywhere, a dissolvable head, like instant coffee like head, a lost head.

Moassi: (*snores*)

Marie-Jeanne: ...and then I can keep my name or I can change my name, for a name that encompasses me is no longer there. Because then I'm everywhere. I am then everything and all all at once. You know this morning when we were walking to the station in Kortessem together, in that suffocating silence, I had the feeling my body wasn't around my spirit anymore, but the other way around. My legs were moved to the same rhythm as yours.

Moassi: (*snores*)

Marie-Jeanne: But that's too simple, I don't believe in the body and then in the spirit. Much too schematic, so closed. I think I'm a little bag of meat

and things that happen blast holes through, and by that I'm becoming a field. What do you think?

Moassi: (*snores*)

Marie-Jeanne: You sleep well. Quick. Good sign. Good conscience. I knew it. I trust you. I don't know if that's wise. I'll trust you anyway. Now I've just gone out and invested in a heavy alarm system and I'm lying here, midnight coming, in a greasy hotel with an Arab. And I'm not afraid.

Moassi, do you hear me? No. Moassi, maybe I really ought confess something. I don't think I have anything like an intense emotion right now. I'm free from emotions. I'm not afraid of that, it's as if I'm made of water. All the rest is dissolving. I think I can go anywhere now. Moassi? Moassi...

Moassi: Mmmggr.

Marie-Jeanne: You don't have to over do it with that good conscience. I can go outside. I can easily go outside now. I'm not afraid. I can go downstairs and to the left and to the right, I can choose, this street, that street. Moassi, I'm going to do it, and I don't know if I'll come back. Yes, Paris! The streets of Paris, at night, wonderful, and it's still warm, I'll see where I end up. Outside, now I can go outside.

(She sits on the edge of the bed.)

Moassi, it's been enough for us. Sleepyhead.

(She gathers her things and adjusts her clothes, but not her shoes, which she carries in order to keep quiet.)

I'm going outside, who knows what will happen. Moassi, I'm going to disappear in the streets...

(She heads towards the door.)

Moassi, say something. *(she lowers herself to the ground, leans her back upon the door)* Does it disturb you that I'm leaving?

Moassi: grrrrsnrukkkellidesnurk

Marie-Jeanne: We're not exactly hitched to each other, are we? That is so good, Moassi dear, that is so good that you don't hold me. I need that. I can become so many different people and you let me do that, dear Moassi, you do that so improbably good. That you let me do that, thank you dear Moassi, *(begins to fall asleep)* thank you, I don't need to be me anymore, *(falls more asleep)* see, I can go everywhere, that feels so fine, lovely, so fine *(she falls asleep next to the door)*.

(Both sleep.)

Marie-Jeanne: A rodent! An rodent on my toes, my God a mouse, no there it is, that's a rat!

Moassi: *(becomes sleepily awake)* Shhh relax, relax.

Marie-Jeanne: No shhh, that's a rat there and he's been on my toes!

Moassi: *(stands and helps her to her feet, guides her to her bed)* Why were you over there anyway?

Marie-Jeanne: I found it a good place.

Moassi: Let me have a look, did he bite you?

Marie-Jeanne: Leave it alone!

Moassi: Come, it's not so serious. Where would you like to sleep?

Marie-Jeanne: In bed this time.

Moassi: You'll be alright? Do you think you'll be able to sleep?

Marie-Jeanne: Yes yes, they can't get in here.

Moassi: O they can crawl right in there they can. Can't you hear them skittering along the edges?

Marie-Jeanne: Enough of you.

Moassi: Goodnight.

(He motions as if to give her a goodnight kiss, hesitates and refrains.)

Marie-Jeanne: *(isn't especially disappointed by this. She is both clumsy and detached from the common idioms of love and in this, they ride a similar wavelength).*

Goodnight.

(Silence.)

Moassi: Marie-Jeanne? You're sleeping. Maybe in sleep the eyes go open. Now I am awake but I am as blind as if my eyes were shut. Maybe you are seeing now what we didn't see when we were awake. We're making a blind jump, Marie-Jeanne, blind. And we jump and maybe there's just no water at all. Marie-Jeanne, in fact, I'm a frog, my life a chain of blind jumps. Me, a jumping frog in a puddle of water where no light can enter. Sometimes I'm making really big jumps but I always land on the same spot again. A little quarter turn to the left or to the right, okay, but with this the horizon fails to break open.

I know it Marie-Jeanne, I know it so well.

Marie-Jeanne: Is that so?

Moassi: You're awake?

Marie-Jeanne: Go on.

Moassi: There's nothing more to go on about. That's hell. There's nothing more to go on about. After every turning point, there was no turning point. There's no tension. There's no resolution. There's no more drama. The jokes are nearly over with and my own drama lies somewhere flattened under a back wheel of history. It goes its own way. It follows its way like a dog bites its tail.

Marie-Jeanne: Moassi, let that dog just once take a bite of my thighs. I'm right here with you, nothing can come between that, no matter what you've been through.

Moassi: I don't think that I've been through so many things. So many things have been through me.

Marie-Jeanne: I don't believe that, not from you.

Moassi: You're right. There's 42 years of resistance lying here.

Marie-Jeanne: Well it looks quite good on you.

Moassi: That's true, free from rust, coughing, and calcification.

Marie-Jeanne: Forty-two years of resistance and still intact!

Moassi: Intact and unchanged, really nothing has changed, from rebellion to rebellion. Nothing changes. First against my parents as a 15 year-old in Sfax, where we lived in Tunisia. If they could only stay on their knees long enough praying, they believed that the dictatorship would change into a paradise for them. The only thing that's improved in their lives is that they have more callous on the knees. Around my 18th birthday, together with my brother and my friends going protesting, and then in the organized resistance. In prison I didn't resist. I was sentenced to 25 years. I got free after the second.

I didn't do anything to get that. That's made an impact, I didn't do anything to get that. There was – what they called – 'an accident' with my brother. He was together with me in prison. He did resist.

As a refugee arriving in Belgium. Intact and unchanged. On a certain day the head of the refugee center asked us not to be out on the street in groups of any more than ten at the same time. That this would be unconventional in Flanders and that we should respect that. I laughed out loud and said that if for the Flemish people respecting somebody is the same thing as imitating somebody, then they should give the right to vote to their own mirrors. From that moment, punishment upon punishment. And then I left. Nothing changed, intact. But now: no papers. After a long search I was able to find under the table work at the Nissan garage in Kortesseem. That man was in fact very good for me. For three years I'm doing this now. He taught me Dutch, and his wife regularly brought me barrels full of books so that I wouldn't make too much noise. I read them all. I received food and lodging and once in awhile he gave me something extra.

Marie-Jeanne: And with that you went to the Aldi?

Moassi: Or I saved it.

Marie-Jeanne: To do what?

Moassi: To buy a train ticket, for example.

Marie-Jeanne: To do what?

Moassi: To come out somewhere where I could become a moose.

Marie-Jeanne: A moose?

Moassi: Just because you've run out of illusions doesn't mean that you've given up. A glorious and noble moose, so transparent that it doesn't need any papers.

Marie-Jeanne: *(she looks at him, slowly becomes a moose)* You have to touch it. Here.

Moassi: Where?

Marie-Jeanne: Here. You feel it? The knobs.

Moassi: *(also slowly becomes a moose)* Now that you say so, it's becoming an entire tree.

Marie-Jeanne: A reindeer.

Moassi: You can't buy the farm with it, but it's not so bad.

(They walk about the room as two moose.)

Marie-Jeanne: Don't start dreaming about farms because then right away you have to have ponies then. And what can we do with ponies?

Moassi: Even the smallest pony, we grind him into baloney.

Marie-Jeanne: Well, you are a reindeer, aren't you.

(They eat from the tops of the trees, graze, and lie down.)

Marie-Jeanne: I had a deep sleep, me.

Moassi: Yes, me too. It was late last night.

Marie-Jeanne: What time do you think it is now?

Moassi: Quarter before ten.

Marie-Jeanne: It looks quite busy out there.

Moassi: Lots of people on the street.

Marie-Jeanne: Is that normal in Paris?

Moassi: I've been told so.

Marie-Jeanne: Lots of police, as well.

Moassi: That scares me.

Marie-Jeanne: The police?

Moassi: If they do a check-up. I don't have any papers. They'll throw me right out of the country.

Marie-Jeanne: Then we were improbably lucky yesterday on the train.

Moassi: You could say it was a calculated risk. If it hadn't been clear to the conductor that you were travelling with me, he would have undoubtedly asked for my papers.

Marie-Jeanne: What will we do here then.

Moassi: I'd prefer just to wait a little until it's calmer outside and then go on. Do you mind that?

Marie-Jeanne: No, no.

Moassi: But you go, really, go and discover the city, I'll wait here for you.

Marie-Jeanne: No, no, I'll wait with you, and then we go together.

Moassi: Then we stay here now?

Marie-Jeanne: For me that's fine, we wait until it's calmer outside and then we'll see further. But one little thing, Moassi.

Moassi: What?

Marie-Jeanne: That rat.

Moassi: You want me to catch it?

Marie-Jeanne: I can make some coffee, if you like, because I've brought an electric kettle and some filters.

Moassi: All good, I still have some bread.

(They eat.)

I find it lovely, the way the light falls in the room.

Marie-Jeanne: And all in all it's fine. Except for that rat.

Moassi: I can take care of that.

Marie-Jeanne: Virus dredgers, little breeding garbage trucks that drive much too quickly.

Moassi: Want me to catch him now?

Marie-Jeanne: Oh, that would actually make me feel much better, yes.

(Moassi lies on his stomach, flat on the floor.)

Those animals, they feed upon our diseases.

(Moassi stretches his hands out before him, and waits.)

The stuff we excrete, sweat out, throw away because otherwise we'd die, or kill each other - this they live from. They're the murders we don't commit.

They're the cancers from which we are still waiting to die from. Their tails fume with our repulsiveness. The skittering of their little claws puts rhythm into the us getting used to our house, garden, and kitchen comfort horror. The banal, daily evil we enact flashes with succour in their schmuck-ladled eyes. It is the hideousness of this paper civilisation that shines through the opaque gloss in the flecks of their eyes. And in their squeaks echoes resonate of our perpetual drift towards genocidal behaviour.

Moassi: I've got him!

Marie-Jeanne: Ah!

Moassi: I've got him, I've got him good!

Marie-Jeanne: Watch that he doesn't bite you. What are you going to do now?

Moassi: Get your kettle.

Marie-Jeanne: What?

Moassi: Do what I say. I'll quickly get rid of him and his whole family. Get your kettle. Fill it and turn it on. Good. Wait till the water boils.

Marie-Jeanne: What are you going to do?

Moassi: If you take a living rat and put him in boiling water the screeching sound he'll make is so disgusting and painful that the other rats will never go near that spot for the rest of their lives. It's a sound so high no human can hear it. But all too well for any rat say, within a few hundred meters. The most effective method.

Marie-Jeanne: The waters boiling.

Moassi: Good, flip the lid.

Marie-Jeanne: I can't.

Moassi: Flip the lid.

(Moassi swiftly moves to the kettle holding the rat tightly in both hands. He stuffs him in.) Here you!

(He holds the lid tight and turns the kettle on once again.)

(It is dead silent.)

Marie-Jeanne: You hear anything?

Moassi: No, people can't hear it.

Marie-Jeanne: Is that too high for a person?

Would a person be able to hear it if it were to happen to another person?

And would he then be aware, and would he then be able to tell others that they should never ever go to that spot again?

Moassi: In the villages in Rwanda they now brew beer. Primus, from the brewery of Haacht. Heineken also plans to go.

Marie-Jeanne: And in Auschwitz they say it's good living now.

Moassi: It's still noisy out there. It seems like it's growing.

Marie-Jeanne: What are they shouting now? Or is that singing?

Moassi: Keep the curtains closed.

Marie-Jeanne: But they're not going to come and ask you for your papers here.

Moassi: I prefer it if they're closed.

Marie-Jeanne: Good, now we'll have time to plan what we're going to do once it gets calm outside.

Moassi: We don't have to do that together.

Marie-Jeanne: But it's just because we don't have to do that together, dear Moassi. I have a plan. A long-term business plan.

Moassi: (*laughs*) I haven't any experience in business.

Marie-Jeanne: Do you think the bird-egg has any experience when flying towards the branches of the trees for the first time?

Moassi: No, but she already has the genes for it.

Marie-Jeanne: Maybe I can fry you an omelet with these genes of ours so that you no longer know where you come from. You sit there. You're a Pakistani, and this here is your night shop. Good afternoon, sir.

Moassi: Good afternoon.

Marie-Jeanne: My name is Marie-Jeanne Daems and I've come here together with my colleague, Moassi, to offer you our services.

Moassi: We no need, thank you thank you.

Marie-Jeanne: A pack of Barclay, please.

(Moassi gives her a cigarette.)

Marie-Jeanne: How much is it.

Moassi: Five euro.

Marie-Jeanne: There you go.

Moassi: Bye bye.

Marie-Jeanne: No good. No good sir, no good. You should have offered me something else from behind your counter. But yes! Come now, try again.

Moassi: Would you care for anything else?

Marie-Jeanne: No good. Completely no good. Sir, you have to awaken my desire for another little product. You need to say: 'If you'd like to improve upon your inner balance m'am, I have for you this here lemonade.' Bam, sold! Of course we want that because in the very depths of our being we shuffle about in shame, our blubber looming before us like a bowl of tapioca pudding we've just snuck away with. Mr. Pakistani, allow my colleague Moassi and I to run your shop for one week, free and for nothing.

Moassi: But but no, my shop!

Marie-Jeanne: And it stays your shop! Just that my colleague and I will run the place for a short period of one week. You may rest, watch singing elephants or continue to carry beginning to look like a cardboard box. We'll make sure that your profits are doubled, and that that profit is for you.

Moassi: Are you mother Theresa? Do you also suck festers?

Marie-Jeanne: No, it's a soft drink we're launching!

Moassi: Marie-Jeanne, where you going with this?

Marie-Jeanne: May we begin, Mr. Pakistani, or may we begin?

Moassi: It's good.

Marie-Jeanne: Voila, step one: victory. We now have a night shop for a whole week. You make a big wooden shelf and engrave in it very elegantly: 'Drink Mojeanne'. (Moassi, Marie-Jeane.) I make a fresh little juice and then we put it into bottles. We do so well the first week that the next week, we go into another night shop and do the exact same thing. The week after that, the same again; and from then on, we start paying others to do it as well. Every dime we make, we reinvest. After one year we'll have a network of rapidly spreading proportions. Then it's time for phase two. You're the CEO of a corporation that invests risk capital. And this here is your office. Knock knock.

Moassi: One moment please. (*whispers*) Marie-Jeanne, are you completely mad?

Marie-Jeanne: Knock knock.

Moassi: Come in.

Marie-Jeanne: Marie-Jeanne Daems, from the Mojeanne Company. You're familiar with our products?

Moassi: Not in the details, no.

Marie-Jeanne: But you've undoubtedly seen our numbers?

Moassi: They must not have landed on my desk yet.

Marie-Jeanne: Allow me a moment to make you familiar with them. And then I bring him so far that he invests a couple hundred thousand euros in the further development of Mojeanne Company. Mojeanne grows and grows and after two years we receive a letter from the Coca-Cola Company: might we be interested in a take-over?

You a million euros and me a million euros, and then there's just a little talk about what we're going to do next.
What d'ya think?

Moassi: I didn't know you had such talents.

Marie-Jeanne: Then you never saw me as an airplane consultant.

Moassi: I'm not sure I'd get in it.

Marie-Jeanne: But come on! In five years time we'll be riding back here in a taxi and all those people down there will be completely gone. Then we'll take a photo from this here window and then we'll go back home and then we'll stick it in our little book.

Moassi: And then?

Marie-Jeanne: And then we can start thinking about which mobile home we'd like.

Moassi: Do you really think it'll be better then?

Marie-Jeanne: Everywhere we go, big signs: 'Time's up, get the Mojeanne Experience.'

Moassi: And this they stow away in their fridge?

Marie-Jeanne: Or glup glup, straight to the belly.

Moassi: And then the Mojeanne Experience sits somewhere in the intestines, digesting away?

Marie-Jeanne: Yes, but we're sitting somewhere in the sun, digesting away.

Moassi: Do you think something would have changed then?

Marie-Jeanne: What do you want to say?

Moassi: We've just changed columns then. That we're not any longer in the 94% without, but with the 6% with. They don't even need to change their statistics for us. The 6% can't get bigger anyway so because we've joined them somebody from the 6 will have to go to the 94. Maybe somebody we know.

Marie-Jeanne: But that's good for us.

Moassi: That's good for them. Nothing changes. This is good, proper behavior. Normal, desirable, as is to be expected and anticipated. And everything stays intact and unchanged. We don't even stink. We don't even stink from what we're not doing.

Marie-Jeanne: But we're still entrepreneurs, aren't we?

Moassi: You play your DNA out to the rhythm of a roaring ideology.

Moassi: The fire of everyday gaining at my heels, snapping at them. In the backs of my eyes a melting neon sign. A smoldering mirage begins to drip. If I keep my eyes open long enough, without blinking, the image comes to a standstill. I'm at the eye of it, the axis. Anger is lost, memory is lost. I wish I could drool, that I could drool so much that it would cover the earth, that it would cover the earth like a blanket so that for one night, for one night alone, the earth would be able to sleep, to close its eyes just for a moment, and then sleep and tomorrow rise again restored.

Marie-Jeanne: *(suddenly hears shouting, goes to look)* That has to be football. If you ask me the French are playing a match today that their national pride depends on.

Moassi: No, I don't think there're any big matches at the moment.

Marie-Jeanne: An exodus like that can only be for a match of historical importance.

Moassi: Maybe it's a pop concert.

Marie-Jeanne: Well it's an historical one then.

Moassi: For Sudan: Save Darfur with Charles Aznavour.

Marie-Jeanne: Or Pearl Jam. I hope so. I find them so boss. Maybe we'll be able to hear them.

Moassi: World politics through the eardrum. Have always suspected that the solutions are more simple than what they suggest.

Marie-Jeanne: Sometimes, dear Moassi, it seems like you'll dissolve into a weeping willow. You'd find that too simple.

Moassi: No no, not at all. Weeping willow? Yes. Sometimes I don't know how else I'm able to stand.

Marie-Jeanne: You have to wash it away with your eyes. Like a fire extinguisher. And then stay looking, stay looking at the fire of everyday, and stay pumping, with your eyes stay pumping until you've gone completely empty, no desires anymore, no hope and no expectations. And then you touch the eternal will, the primary will that makes the earth turn about. It doesn't just stand there. You lean on it and it crawls into you and you into it and there is no talk anymore of you, and you are free, true, dispossessed, and dangerous.

Moassi: Thoughts are for the brain what urine is for the kidneys.

Marie-Jeanne: But thoughts like that let you casually piss on the head of whoever needs it.

(Moassi stands and takes from his suitcase a large, leather belt. He sits again, with the belt in his hand, playing with the various loops that hang from it.)

Marie-Jeanne: Did you want to show that to me?

Moassi: I don't know if I wanted to, I did it.

Marie-Jeanne: So lovely. And all those little frilly frallies on it.

Moassi: Where do you think it comes from?

Marie-Jeanne: From where you come from, no?

Moassi: Would you like to have it?

Marie-Jeanne: Me? It's a present from you to me?

Moassi: If you'd like. For what do you think it's used for?

Marie-Jeanne: I have no idea. I'm sure I'll be able to figure out something to with it though. You don't need it anymore?

Moassi: No, it's yours.

Marie-Jeanne: Fantastic, thanks a lot, really. You have to know: what's mine is yours, what's mine is yours, really, if you need to use it again, you don't even need to ask.

Moassi: Thank you.

Marie-Jeanne: I could put little coins in here or a picnic maybe, if we later go on a walk. Have you ever used it?

Moassi: I got it from the mosque.

Marie-Jeanne: Geez, and what'd you do to get it?

Moassi: Nothing. They give it out to the ones who might want to do something on their own, but more so to make a bond with the ones who have already used it. I got this belt from the imam. A speaker came from Afghanistan and the imam in Hasselt saw how fascinated I sat there and listened. After that he gave me this belt. And his email address. In case I wanted to go further.

Marie-Jeanne: Further?

Moassi: Straight into the arms of Allah, with a bang on the tambourine.

Marie-Jeanne: Maybe that's something like the rosary is with us? Every loop a new little prayer?

Moassi: You might say that. A very powerful rosary.

Marie-Jeanne: With us, we don't use it anymore.

Moassi: With us, we use it more and more.

Marie-Jeanne: Do you believe it has an effect?

Moassi: For sure, but what kind?

Marie-Jeanne: With us a rosary was something that bead by bead you sewed up your mouth with. You couldn't speak anymore, you carried on mumbling the customs, a slow tram to God the father. These days no one uses it anymore. That's what you get when the last stop is nowhere in sight, people get off the tram.

Moassi: Yet just before they get off they're raging with incredible fury. In desperate denial. That's why a belt like this is so popular at the moment with us.

Marie-Jeanne: So how do you use it?

Moassi: I would carry it like this, around the hips, a bit loose, and then we would walk together, you and me, through an avenue where hundreds and hundreds of prairie flowers are swaying, to and fro, poppies that wave to us. And there we enter, and we pluck the styles and the seeds, and in each compartment of the belt we put the seed of a poppy in there. And like this we carry on, until the moment comes when we're walking through an avenue where there are no poppies anymore. Then we take the seeds in between our fingers and pulverize them, and we let them blow along the way.

Marie-Jeanne: With a bang on the tambourine?

Moassi: That's how I'd do it, yes.

Marie-Jeanne: But you're not supposed to do it that way, are you?

Moassi: No, how would you use it.

Marie-Jeanne: Let me have a look here. Well, in principal, you could use it as a rosary, of course... But it has a military air about it... Or something of the Red Cross.. a First Aid Belt? A CPR belt... A lot can go in there...

Yes I think I'd use it as a CPR belt, a Caring for Perspicacious Resolutions belt... for those who just want to get out for a quick moment and then, by accident, they land in solutions. It can happen very quickly, you know. For a moment you're not quite there and bang! solutions at your feet. And then we have this belt and out of this pouch we get a grey stone. Beautiful, intense, robust: indissolvable! And this pouch, for example, I'd keep empty, just air. That seems odd, but if you look long enough to 'air', or think about something that's 'simply empty', then you quickly get rid of your solutions, and at least you can go on again. Yes, I'd use it as a First-Aid belt, a CPR belt, me.

Moassi: But that's also not how it's done with you guys, is it?

Marie-Jeanne: It's strange to hear you talk in terms of 'you guys'. Doesn't suit you.

Moassi: Sometimes I wish I could say 'we', it hasn't worked out.

Marie-Jeanne: Me neither. I can't do it.

Moassi: I don't know if I'm still part of a 'we'.

Marie-Jeanne: Me neither.

Moassi: I don't know if that's something awful or maybe some kind of opportunity.

Marie-Jeanne: I do think that it ought be something soothing. That you can feel yourself a part of a people or religion. Even fun.

Moassi: And fizzling. Like a fuze.

Marie-Jeanne: But in the end still safe. The spirit of people and religion blows up an air bag hefty enough.

Moassi: But it's so thick you can't steer the thing anymore.

Marie-Jeanne: But sometimes that can be rather cozy, no?

Moassi: The people sitting in the back and not driving are the ones who get sick, chauffeurs and pilots rarely get sick.

Marie-Jeanne: I want to undress my face.

Moassi: Say again?

Marie-Jeanne: That I would want to undress my face.

Moassi: But I see your face.

Marie-Jeanne: Really?

Moassi: Yes, I see your face.

Marie-Jeanne: My naked face?

Moassi: Yyyyes.

Marie-Jeanne: I wish that it could really be like that: a community of only naked faces. Together. A community that doesn't have a name yet.

Moassi: Like us now?

Moassi: Are you hungry?

Marie-Jeanne: Starting to be, yes.

Moassi: It's already after ten.

Marie-Jeanne: So late. Maybe we should go out and eat something.

Moassi: I don't dare to yet.

Marie-Jeanne: Otherwise I can go fetch something.

Moassi: Just listen to the ruckus out there. I wouldn't go out if I were you.

Marie-Jeanne: Are you afraid?

Moassi: It's getting out of hand.

Marie-Jeanne: It's become the roaring and howling of an insurgent, relentless mass. So you don't want to eat anything then?

Moassi: Maybe we can go for a walk if it calms down tonight, for sure something will be open.

Marie-Jeanne: Are you just going to stay over there standing like that?

Moassi: I didn't really think about it.

Marie-Jeanne: Maybe you should stand over here.

Moassi: There?

(Marie-Jeanne kisses Moassi.)

Marie-Jeanne: And what's that do to 'our poor in spirits'?

Moassi: It makes the matter move.

Marie-Jeanne: Thought it might.

(She kisses him again.)

Moassi: My, your skin is white here.

Marie-Jeanne: It doesn't catch much sun. It's normal, isn't it.

Moassi: It's like a sheet of white paper.

Marie-Jeanne: Do you want to write something on it?

Moassi: No no, not at all, it's so blank, so white, so nothing.

Marie-Jeanne: I used to go to a tanning booth but from the moment they came out with all those cancers I just had to stop with it.

Moassi: It's so weird that from here to here this piece is you. There's no more than this 100 centimeters. And you're somewhere in between there. Everything you are. That's it.

Marie-Jeanne: Yes, you could trade me in for three plastic bags full of groceries, it's the same volume.

Moassi: But your composition is more complicated.

Marie-Jeanne: You think so? Take a pot of pickles, for example. Moassi I can promise you that if you studied it through and through it would prove just as overwhelming as, say, my wrists. Or take a tin of spam from the Hormel Foods Corporation, that's got to be just as juicy and complex as 450 grams of my own arm.

Moassi: Look, my arm next to yours.

Marie-Jeanne: Two tins of spam. One with brown sauce and one with béchamel.

Moassi: I'm not afraid of spam and I'm not afraid of cell tissues.

Marie-Jeanne: I'm only afraid of ghosts.

Moassi: That me in you, is it hidden between all those cell tissues? Do I then need to be afraid? I'd like to hear it sometime, I'd like to feel it, not only your cell tissues, but you, yourself, your self of your self. I'd like to put my hand into your skin. I'd like to know. You. To come closer. Even if I cut you open and placed my hand between your muscles, it would still not be close enough. Where can I find you?

Marie-Jeanne: (*brings her eyes almost against his cheek*) And you, where can I find you? Here? (*she tickles him, he laughs*) In that reflex of your arm, or here, as your mouth exhales in short, little spurts of air?

(*tickles him again*)

Moassi: (*laughs*) When they let me out of prison my uncle, he left a car there for me. When I could finally leave, I got my old clothes back and a set of keys to his Ford. The prison was a camp deep in the desert. I was able to leave at noontime, it was August. It got to be nearly 140 degrees in the car. After five hours of driving, I came to a village. I had blisters on my lips. There they gave me something to drink. I filled the tank and that night I slept on the backseat. In the smell of burnt rubber and flesh. That night I dreamt of arms, legs, and torsos sliding over one another. Body fluids, sweat, glistening lineaments. In the morning I continued driving. Again the heat. And a blister of a sun. I got to my uncle's house early in the afternoon. I gave him the car back, he opened the trunk, and inside there was a large plastic package. We lifted it out. It was a body bag. He opened the zipper and it took me a few minutes before I realized it was the body of my brother. The prison guards had put it in the trunk.

For two days I'd driven around with it. It was unrecognizable, mutilated, his face was swollen as if his head could burst any moment.

Marie-Jeanne: Would you already like to put your pee-pee in my wee-wee?

Moassi: In my brother's skull there was a hole, I could look right through it, he wasn't there.

Marie-Jeanne: I'm not so sure you'll find me in my wee-wee, sometimes you do, sometimes you don't.

Moassi: I don't care about certainties, my dear.

Marie-Jeanne: No certainties? And you're telling me that, you who've already been crushed so many times under the certainty that the universe is a load too heavy to walk around with, with your back straight up? You don't care about certainty? That's brave, I find that incredibly brave.

Moassi: The sing along song of tragedy doesn't interest me.

Marie-Jeanne: Ah, now I've found you!

Moassi: You know, my brother showed his true colours when he picked up a rock and threw it towards the secret police, he was there when he yelled spontaneously through a megaphone on the market square, and when he kissed his wife Latifa, then, there, then you could see him.

Marie-Jeanne: All in all, it doesn't happen very often that you can see 'me' in my little bag of meat.

Moassi: *(without a sound moves his lips 'me')*

Marie-Jeanne: *(without a sound moves her lips 'me', a few times, then with sound)* Me... I had to identify my husband. Fifteen years ago. He dozed off, he did that a lot, only this time he was behind the wheel of his car and he was driving on the E40.

Four dead, his car completely burnt out. That night I had to go to the hospital. They pulled open a drawer and I saw a hard, black sausage, a charred railway tie, I said that's him. I was wrong. That was the other car's driver. The funeral was postponed two days. My children vomited when I told them. I said there's nothing to see there and then they vomited some more.

Moassi: It's a privilege to visibly lose your visage. Most of the time it slowly wears away.

Marie-Jeanne: Then I went to my sister and I said my husband is dead and she let me in and poured coffee and she sat beside me and did a bit of understanding. I said Lilleee? Lillyaaaaan? Where are you girl? Have you become a tablecloth? But you already have so many! She did a bit of laughing and she was ashamed about the bit of laughing but I said you're not laughing those are little muscles contracting in and out. And then she said to take a lot of time off. I took my bike back home.

Moassi: First, we think we know somebody, then we think we know a body, and then nothing anymore. Nothing. A vacuum.

Marie-Jeanne: Dreadful.

Moassi: Unbearable, and still it's that that calls me, that generates me, that greets me.

Marie-Jeanne: Hi Moassi.

Moassi: Can you remember the first time was that you weren't in your little bag of meat?

Marie-Jeanne: Yes. Five, six years ago. I was in my bed laying awake all night again. I got up at five. I thought: I'm going shopping. There was nobody on the street, I don't think I was, either, now that I think of it. I went shopping but of course like every other time I didn't have enough money to buy something I felt I could express myself with. Or something that would accentuate my personality. To buy a Häagen-Dazs, for example, or a Scapa of Scotland, or a Nokia. I was already slowly losing it, by the way. And by the time I had passed the cash register, I was completely gone.

Moassi: Just gone?

Marie-Jeanne: I've only just gotten back.

Marie-Jeanne: I'm scared.

Moassi: They're demolishing the street. They're plundering.

(A can of beer flies breaks through the window.)

Marie-Jeanne: Don't touch it! It could be a bomb!

Moassi: No, that's a beer.

Marie-Jeanne: Why would anyone throw a can of beer through a window? You'd drink it first, wouldn't you?

Moassi: Maybe he's already drunk enough?

Marie-Jeanne: Don't touch it! That won't pass here, Moassi!

Moassi: We'll have a draft through that hole there.

Marie-Jeanne: Hang a towel over it!

Moassi: Outside they're mad, they've gone out of control!

Marie-Jeanne: They're exaggerating, they can't stop anymore. That's not because of the football.

Moassi: Then what do you think it is?

Marie-Jeanne: They're simply very angry.

Moassi: There's scarcely a difference between anger and frenzied exuberance.

Marie-Jeanne: How come they're happy all of a sudden?

Moassi: Because their team won.

Marie-Jeanne: If it's only because of that, what we have here is actually a sorrowful, a sorrow that's far too big. Isn't that so? Maybe this afternoon their little team won and they went through the roof with joy. And because they went through the roof they suddenly realized that they never wanted to go back under the roof anymore, and from now on they'll be howling through and through the city until the end of their days.

Moassi: I'm going to drink that beer.

Marie-Jeanne: No!

Moassi: How come?

Marie-Jeanne: Then you're a part of it. And maybe that's collaboration. We don't know what kind of uprising that is out there.

Moassi: It seems a rather spontaneous one to me.

Marie-Jeanne: Maybe they were just watching a musical or something in a stadium, les Misérables, that's really lovely, if you see it big, really grabs you.

Moassi: They're serious, it's becoming a liturgy here.

Marie-Jeanne: I'm familiar with that, sometimes I also take a thing too seriously.

Moassi: It's becoming a song of sheep and goats.

Marie-Jeanne: They're certainly convinced about it.

Moassi: Only sheep and goats can do that.

Marie-Jeanne: Sometimes I long for such conviction.

Moassi: To become an animal and no longer worry about not knowing. Just itching fleas and instinct. Shall we go outside now?

Marie-Jeanne: Yes.

Moassi: And what if we lose each other?

Marie-Jeanne: We'll hold each other's hands.

Moassi: It's a zoo out there.

Marie-Jeanne: We haven't left to stay here inside.

Moassi: It's really a zoo out there, I don't want to lose you in it.

Marie-Jeanne: What's that now? Out of the on-going day to day whirlpool by stepping right here in this room, wasn't that madness?

Moassi: I hope you know what you're doing.

Marie-Jeanne: That doesn't matter, sometimes you do and see where you come out.

Moassi: I don't want the outcome of all we've done to be that we lose one another in a few moments.

Marie-Jeanne: I'm standing here with you. I'm not afraid anymore. I'm a beginning, so I exist.

Moassi: And what's happening outside, do you think that's also a beginning?

Marie-Jeanne: Those people are running around outside like they hope to drill a hole in the ground. Look Moassi, that lady over there, she has to be as old as I am, she's sprinting through the street in her panties.

Moassi: She's got a hole already, in her stockings.

Marie-Jeanne: She runs as if she's dancing a tarantella, as if she wants to get rid of a poison.

Moassi: Imagine when she gets home and realizes that it's only her shoes that she lost.

Marie-Jeanne: That would be a terribly disappointment.

Moassi: But how could one prevent it?

Marie-Jeanne: By going outside. We've got to go on the street, we've got to fortify them, so that it won't end in riot and fury, but can carry on further now.

Moassi: Maybe.

Marie-Jeanne: Maybe.

Moassi: Maybe within two days the police are escorting me back onto the plane.

Marie-Jeanne: Maybe within two days I'm rinsing out yoghurt pots to do something a little creative again.