

MIRIAM BOOLSEN

THEN

WE

WENT

UNDERGROUND

TRANSLATION MIRIAM BOOLSEN, MADELEINE VAN LEER

(The One and The Other, busy with their business. Something they forget and pick up again all the time. Embroidering or sawing or building or... Something. Something concrete.

The One and The Other are two creatures, which have been around forever. Everything they do is extremely important, but does anyone remember why? On the other hand, somebody has to busy them selves with the task of making the Earth spin around, and The One and The Other aren't afraid of hard work. And then there is the question about somebody coming or not, and maybe you are not supposed to talk about it at all)

1.

The One: How is the world doing today?

The Other: Don't know, haven't looked yet.

The One: You smell.

The Other: No I don't.

The One: I bet you were in the kitchen again, eating herring. With raw onions. Onions, I say!

The Other: No I wasn't.

The One: I can smell it. And what about the plants?

The Other: Dead.

The One: Again. ... The cat chasing the mouse.

The Other: What?

The One: The cat chasing the mouse.

The Other: Yes what?

The One: Nothing. It's a long time ago. You don't think about that anymore, do you?

The Other: What?

The One: You don't think about that anymore, do you? The cat chasing the mouse.

The Other: Did it?

The One: Always. You didn't think about that, did you? You didn't see it. You don't see it. The things. I do. ... Where was the dog buried?

The Other: ...

The One: Well?! Where was the dog buried? What do you think? Where there was room for it of course. Naturally. I wish it would rain.

The Other: You're impatient. Always were.

The One: No I'm not.

The Other: Yes you are. Always were.

The One: What's up today?

The Other: Nothing much. It's time. For the world. To go on. And us helping.

(close their eyes)

The One: I see the humans being afraid.

The Other: Shh don't have to. Don't have to be afraid. Everything will be alright. Or not. But today it will, don't have to be afraid.

The One: I see the children being ill.

The Other: Shh... you're not alone. Sitting there, lying there, you are not alone. Never. Feel for yourself, this is not being alone is it? Feels different. There you are. Right. (Opens her eyes) That's enough, isn't it?

The One: The animals.

The Other: Oh the animals, do I have to do the animals? I'm hungry.

The One: You have to do the animals first.

The Other: But what should I say to them?

The One: Just close your eyes, you will think of something.

The Other: (Closes her eyes) The animals.

The One: Yes, the animals.

The Other: The animals are everywhere.

The One: Yes of course.

The Other: Would you be quiet? I am trying to work here.

The One: But then say something.

The Other: I will if I get the chance.

The One: The animals.

The Other: Yes, the animals. The animals are everywhere and often they aren't noticed at all. But they are there anyway. And they are part of it all. That's very important. Thank you, animals. We thank you sincerely. Without you the humans wouldn't be able to make it. Don't think that it remains unnoticed. Something like that?

The One: Yes.

2.

The One: Do you think it will pass?

The Other: What?

The One: The war.

The Other: Which war?

The One: This one.

The Other: Don't know.

The One: But what do you think?

The Other: Not yet.

The One: Not yet?

The Other: No, not yet.

The One: Why?

The Other: Something has to happen first.

The One: But what?

The Other: I don't know. Something the humans are waiting for.

The One: I don't understand them.

The Other: You don't have to understand them. Luckily. If I had to understand them I would never get anything done. It's none of my business. Luckily.

The One: No me neither.

The Other: That's not what we are here for.

3.

The One: Aaaah, it's getting cooler. We could go outside.

The Other: It's closed outside.

The One: Why.

The Other: They're using it.

The One: What for.

The Other: There are so many of them now.

The One: Since when.

The Other: For some time.

The One: Since when has it been closed down.

The Other: Since last week.

The One: You never told me.

The Other: I thought you knew.

The One: How would I know, you never told me.

The Other: What is there to tell? Outside has been closed down. Like that.
From now on there's only inside.

The One: But but but but. WHAT IF I WANT TO GO OUTSIDE?

The Other: Then you'll just have to think about how it used to be.

The One: But that's not the same thing.

The Other: No but just as good.

The One: That can't be true.

The Other: Why not?

The One: It's not the same thing at all. What if if I don't remember how it used to be?

The Other: Then you've got a problem.

The One: Well.

The Other: You will have to do something about it.

The One: Like what?

The Other: Like, talk to me about it.

The One: But you know absolutely nothing about outside.

The Other: No, but I'll pretend I do.

The One: And I would have to be grateful for that then?

The Other: No need for that, I'd be glad to do it.

4.

The One: (whistles)(annoying)

The Other: What are you doing.... what is this?

The One: I have to whistle to remember how it used to be, whistling is from earlier days.

The Other: Whistling is timeless.

The One: Not for me. (whistles)

The Other: STOP. I'll tell you about how it used to be.

The One: From the beginning?

The Other: From before the beginning:

The world is a cow licking a salty stone. It is neither dark, nor light.

Nobody needs to see the world, because there is nothing to see yet. Not even a flower in a meadow. Much less someone thinking about it.

Everything is at the same time, it is before The Time. Then there is a spot of light and around it is darkness. The first darkness ever. And then there is a before and an after.

The One: And we?

The Other: We are after. First of all there is a below to walk on and then there is an above in order not to disappear. And then we go and sit underground, because now the rest is there too.

The One: But we know about everything.

The Other: We know about everything and everything knows about us. Not a leaf on a branch that slips our attention. Not a tooth in the mouth of a squirrel that hasn't come to our knowledge. Like the waves wave, like the leafs leaf, that's how we are in the world. Invisible, but everywhere. And the humans have never heard of us, but they know we are there.

5.

The One: Do you think somebody will come?

The Other: Do you?

The One: I don't know, maybe you had heard of something?

The Other: No, not me. You?

The One: Of course not, otherwise I wouldn't ask.

The Other: Someone always shows up.

The One: Yes yes yes!! Once in a hundred years somebody shows up! I meant now, today. Maybe you had heard of something, but obviously not. You don't care if anyone shows up.

The Other: They aren't supposed to come.

The One: No, I know that. That's why I want it. If they were meant to come, I wouldn't want it.

6.

The One: Whatever became of your knitting?

The Other: I gave it up.

The One: Why?

The Other: I didn't feel like it anymore.

The One: But you were a real talent, what are you going to do now? Have you considered crocheting?

The Other: Crocheting isn't the answer.

The One: No you're probably right, you know more about it. Wool was always your territory. And? Already spent your time on something else?

The Other: Listening, the whole morning.

The One: So. And heard anything yet?

The Other: A moose and it's two wives. They were whispering. Three is never a good number. One is always going to feel left out.

The One: What about the deaf, the blind and the cripple?

The Other: That's different, they have known each other for so long. And they are busy with other things.

The One: That's true.... are they never going to drop by?

The Other: Who?

The One: The deaf and the blind?

The Other: They are too busy with keeping an eye on the cripple.

The One: It could be the day of the one-coming-in.

The Other: Do not speak gratuitously about the one-coming-in.

The One: But he might come?

The Other: He might come, yes.

7.

The One: I don't remember anything about the way it used to be.

The Other: Doesn't matter.

The One: Doesn't it?

The Other: No, it wasn't anything special.

The One: Are you serious?

The Other: Nothing much.

The One: You remember?

The Other: Bits. Pieces. Things.

The One: Aha.

The Other: We had braids.

The One: Both of us?

The Other: We both had two.

The One: So four?

The Other: Four altogether, yes. And something about bare feet and a dress.

The One: Which colour?

The Other: Blue. And something about dolls. One was called mummy, one was called daddy and so on.

The One: I don't remember anything of it.

The Other: It wasn't worth remembering.

The One: No I believe you, otherwise I would have remembered it.

The Other: You were never good at remembering.

The One: But you are, you still remember everything.

The Other: Not everything. For instance, I have forgotten the milkman.

The One: Oh yes?

The Other: Totally. Every morning he came by with fresh milk, he even said good morning to me and yet I don't remember him at all anymore.

The One: Strange.

The Other: So you would say, yes, he deserved otherwise.

The One: It looks like it. He could have married you.

The Other: Could easily have happened.

The One: And now he is disappeared.

The Other: Clueless.

The One: Lifeless.

The Other: Childless.

The One: Expressionless.

The Other: Homeless.

The One: Poor milkman, that's not what you had in mind.

The Other: That's how fast it goes. One moment you're busy on your milk route, whistling, and the next thing you know you have joined the brotherhood of weightlessness.

8.

The One: Today is another kind of day.

The Other: You think so?

The One: I know, I feel it.

The Other: How?

The One: Feels different, sticky. This day will stick around, it won't just go away.

The Other: And what would happen?

The One: I don't know yet, but it won't be like yesterday. Won't be like the day before yesterday either.

The Other: That would be nice for you.

The One: Oh, it goes for you too.

The Other: What will happen to me then?

The One: Something will happen for both of us.

The Other: Have you been talking to someone?

The One: I don't need to, things like that you just feel.

The Other: I don't feel it.

The One: No you were too busy knitting.

The Other: I told you I'd quit.

The One: Too late.

The Other: I don't believe you.

The One: Doesn't matter. It'll be overwhelming, nobody will ask you whether you agree or not, it will turn your world upside down and mine as well.

The Other: And that would happen today?

The One: Yes, today.

9.

The Other: You look different.

The One: I feel different.

The Other: What has changed then?

The One: I'm thinking about the future.

10.

The Other: We haven't looked at the plants for a long time.

The One: The plants, well, the plants. What is that really. Dill, parsley, camomile, marjoram, thyme, rosemary, what does it mean, really?

The Other: Those are good plants.

The One: Yes, but quite small all of them.

The Other: They are herbs.

The One: Decoration. No big bushes, no big branches. No tree trunks to grab hold on or saw right through the middle. They can't fall down with a lot of noise. They have no crown for the wind to blow in, no leaves bigger than your hands.

The Other: They just don't grow to be that tall.

The One: Yes, well I don't blame them - well, as a matter of fact I do. Just because someone says, 'Hey you, parsley, don't grow to be that tall, grow real slow and drink just a little water', that doesn't necessarily mean you should actually do so.

The Other: We could go and have a look at it.

The One: I don't feel like looking. Nothing has happened anyway. Since yesterday. Since the day before yesterday. I don't feel like slow growing plants anymore. I want movement, I want big roots growing underground and pulling houses up. I want houses being pulled up and tiles flying off and a storm carrying the tiles and eventually crushing them.

The Other: We could discover something.

The One: Like what?

The Other: That Portugal isn't next to Albany.

The One: Is already known.

The Other: The direction of the winds.

The One: I know them by heart already.

The Other: That some animals undergo a sex change.

The One: Everybody has known that forever.

The Other: You could write a poem.

The One: About what?

The Other: About how the snail was crushed on the road.

The One: Was it?

The Other: Of course. No one saw it.

The One: That's what you get if you insist on being small.

The Other: You have become hard.

The One: It's not about being hard, it's about making a conscious decision.

The Other: Not everybody has your background, your self-confidence.

The One: Do you think the one-coming-in can come if it's raining?

The Other: It makes no difference for the one-coming-in.

The One: All footprints have been washed away.

The Other: That doesn't mean anything. If the one-coming-in has to come, he'll come.

11.

The One: There once was a mouse.

The Other:

The One: It was having a hard time.

The Other:

The One: Stomach ache...

The Other:

The One: Head ache...

The Other:

The One: Heart problems...

The Other:

The One: What would you tell that mouse to do?

The Other: Not to worry so much.

The One: It was a mouse that worried a lot.

The Other: Think about something else.

The One: It couldn't.

The Other: Do it anyway.

The One: Do it anyway?

The Other: Yes.

12.

The One: I dreamed that the furniture had come alive. We had a party, I was cracking jokes with the table and the chairs were off their face.

The Other: You still think a lot about what's going on outside.

The One: Of course.

The Other: You shouldn't, everything comes around sooner or later.

The One: Yes, but what good is a fox in the distance that I can barely see? What good are a couple of ducks flying by and half a year later flying back the other way? What good are moles in their holes and toads sitting listlessly by the pond letting one fly after the other pass by?

The Other: Everyone is just doing their best.

The One: But I want more, I want it to be a special day, I want them all to come along, I want life here and that everything is seen. At the end of the day I want everyone to fall down together - tired and content.

The Other: Eventually everything will come.

The One: How can you be so sure?

The Other: Every day I look out the window. One day it's snowing, another day it's raining, on the third or fourth or fifth day it's spring.

The One: I wish I had your conviction.

13.

The One: Now I'm going to love you passionately.

The Other: How were you planning to do that.

The One: I don't know, but there's got to be a way.

The Other: Sometimes I think about your knees.

The One: My knees?

The Other: Yes, there is something very touching about your knees.

The One: And then you forgive me everything?

The Other: More or less.

The One: I wish I had something like that.

The Other: My knees aren't that pretty.

The One: Yes that's the problem.

The Other: Maybe my neck, my neck isn't that bad.

The One: I should say I'm more attracted to your ears.

The Other: My ears? I never could have guessed....

The One: Couldn't the roof collapse for once?

The Other: Difficult, difficult, this house is terribly solid.

The One: Strange that we never once slipped on the stairs and broke our necks.

The Other: Sometimes coincidence is hard to understand.

The One: Yes.

14.

The Other: We are out of wood.

The One: The trees are old.

The Other: They are just as old as we are.

The One: Exactly.

The Other: They'll fall down sooner or later.

The One: You used to be beautiful.

The Other: Yes.

The One: Not any more.

The Other: No.

The One: If the one-coming-in should come, you will be beautiful again.

The Other: I know.

15.

The Other: “One day the sky was blue, bluer than usual and everybody wondered why. The man said to his wife: “The sky really is blue today” and she answered: “Indeed, this is bluer than blue, this is skyblue”. And when they came into the garden it was as if the plants were greener and the birds were singing just a little more cheerful. “What could it be”, they said to each other, piling up the weeds, “what could it be” and they stood still and listened. But there was nothing else to hear than the wind and the birds. And later, after dinner, they stood in front of the window and looked out. And they opened the window a little but they heard nothing. And later, lying in bed, they said to each other: “It was probably nothing, it was probably just a very happy day” and they went to sleep.

The One: You’ve got dreams!

The Other: No I don’t.

The One: Yes I heard it in your voice.

The Other: My voice is just my voice, it has nothing to do with me.

The One: But I heard something.

The Other: I didn't say that.

The One: I know for sure.

The Other: You're imagining.

The One: It sounded like a dream.

The Other: It wasn't a dream.

The One: You are longing for something. I know it.

The Other: I don't long.

16.

The One: Are you sorry?

The Other: For what?

The One: For leaving the city?

The Other: There was nothing in the city.

The One: Really?

The Other: As empty as a shoe box.

The One: And the humans?

The Other: They had already gone somewhere else.

The One: And you didn't know about that?

The Other: Nobody left to tell anymore.

The One: Not so much as a note?

The Other: Eaten.

The One: The rats?

The Other: Yes, the rats.

The One: Never afraid to get down to it.

The Other: Always wanting to be the good example.

17.

The One: A lady goes to the baker. Standing in front of the baker she has completely forgotten what she was going to say. Nothing left but to go home. What a shame, eh?

The Other:

The One: I saw you in a white dress.

The Other: It wasn't me.

The One: It was you all right and ankle socks. You were playing hopscotch and you had bows in your hair.

The Other: It must have been someone else.

The One: No because that other person was standing next to you, it was you, no doubt, and you were very good at it, playing hopscotch. You knew the rules.

The Other: They are not difficult.

The One: There's easy and there's simple. You didn't make a single unnecessary step.

The Other: If you know how it goes....

The One: Exactly.

The Other: I can't step on the lines on purpose, can I?

The One: It wouldn't make you a lesser person.

The Other:

The One:

The Other: Alright. I used to be reckless, that's true.

The One: I'm sure it became you.

The Other: Whenever I saw a stream I would walk through it, barefooted.

The One: And nobody saw you?

The Other: I was alone.

The One: I bet it was summer?

The Other: Always.

The One: And you saw the bees and you thought: “What stripes”.

The Other: All that buzzing.

The One: Did you lie down in the grass?

The Other: I disappeared in the green.

The One: But you came back?

The Other: Had to.

The One: Isn't this the day of the disaster?

The Other: No.

The One: Pity, I had heard about a tidal wave.

The Other: That's not today.

18.

The One: Is it time for the potatoes?

The Other: Not yet.

The One: I can't believe it takes so long.

The Other: Time makes the decisions.

The One: Then I wish it would decide something else.

The Other: Sometimes it goes like this, sometimes it goes like that. You have to get your pleasure from that.

The One: But I thought we were above all that.

The Other: We too are just a part of it.

The One: No we're not. We're not earthworms.

The Other: Almost.

The One: I don't want to be a worm. I want to be the leaf, I want to be the tree.

The Other: One day ...

The One: Yes but it has to be today. I've only got today.

The Other: You've got tomorrow as well.

The One: No, tomorrow is too late. Tomorrow I won't even be the centipede under the stone on the road. Tomorrow I'm not even the stone. Or the road.

The Other: I thought so too. I thought: I've only got today. Today I'm a piece of candy in pretty rustling paper, I'm the most beautiful cake at the bakery. I have to be enjoyed today. But now it's later and I have become a different piece of candy and a different cake.

19.

(a little later)

(sewing, knitting, embroidering, sawing)

20.

The One: Whatever became of the little seal?

The Other: He made it.

The One: Oh, I'm glad to hear that.

The Other: Later he fell in love, but it didn't work out.

The One: Why not?

The Other: They just argued all the time.

The One: And they couldn't talk about it?

The Other: Impossible. Sometimes differences are just too big.

The One: But they still love each other?

The Other: Of course. But they don't see each other anymore.

The One: What a shame.

The Other: It's better that way.

21.

The One: Do you think a beard would suit me?

The Other: I'm sure it would make you look authoritarian.

The One: I might need that from time to time.

The Other: O really, when?

The One: When I see the squirrels pinch all the nuts and I see one bird after another circling over the meadow in vain and I shake my balled fist at them, they only laugh, but they don't give anything back.

The Other: Gormandizers/Gluttons.

The One: Just because they have a soft red belly.

The Other: Some folks think they can do just anything they like.

The One: It's getting colder.

The Other: We are being tested.

The One: But this is nothing and bad luck only makes us stronger.

The Other: Exactly.

22.

The One: What was it about the snow again?

The Other: What about it?

The One: What was so special about it?

The Other: All footprints became visible.

The One: And one's breath?

The Other: That too. Like cooking. Like smoke.

The One: I'm sure it was irritating your throat.

The Other: It was so cold that breathing made the little hairs in your nose freeze.

The One: You didn't feel like screaming, did you?

The Other: Never.

The One: And the trees?

The Other: Covered. Silent.

The One: They are getting old.

The Other: They last as long as they should.

The One: And what happens next?

The Other: The thaw will set in.

The One: And then?

The Other: At first, nothing. Then. New leaves.

The One: Always growing.

The Other: It has to.

The One: Is there no other way?

The Other: Jumping. Planting. Skipping.

The One: Somebody could come.

The Other: Its possible.

The One: Today as much as any other day.

The Other: Maybe.

23.

The One: We'll have to move the stones again.

The Other: The stones are fine as they are.

The One: No, they are rolling down.

The Other: As long as they stay underground.

The One: They are not coming back.

The Other: Only the two of us.

The One: Just us. Everyone is responsible for their own luck.

The Other: We could be too, you know.

The One: How then?

The Other: We could be just a little less modest.

The One: Wouldn't that feel awkward.

The Other: Only in the beginning.

The One: True, you can get used to anything.

The Other: Except death.

The One: No?

The Other: No, death will always come as a surprise.

24.

The One: Why is that?

The Other: Because his appearance always changes.

The One: It is probably an extremely annoying person.

The Other: It is one of the most vulnerable creatures I've ever met.

The One: Have you met him then?

The Other: Of course I have, he was here, wasn't he!

The One: You're right! I had completely forgotten.

The Other: It was at the corner. He came from one side, I came from another.

The One: And then what?

The Other: He was terrified.

The One: Probably a bad conscience.

The Other: He only does what he has to do.

The One: You are right, I'm being judgmental.

25.

The One: Ah, the grass!

The Other: The grass, yes.

The One: So much energy and urge for action really puts you in a good mood.

26.

The One: Are you hungry?

The Other: A little bit.

The One: That will pass.

The Other: I know.

The One: It could be some other day.

The Other: Could it?

The One: No, maybe not.

The Other: Your hair is turning gray.

The One: I don't feel it.

The Other: Later, when you have the time.

The One: And the rabbits? Dead probably?

The Other: We have eaten them, that's a different story.

27.

The One: I saw the ducks outside.

The Other: The ducks?

The One: Yes, they were busy.

The Other: Oh, is it autumn then?

The One: No, it is just before, but they are already talking about it.

The Other: Then they are very much on time.

The One: That's the way they are. Very sensible.

The Other: I didn't know that.

The One: No, they don't show it.

28.

The Other: And soon they will be leaving?

The One: Soon they'll be leaving, yes.

The Other: But they'll come back?

The One: Always.

The Other: I find that so nice of them.

The One: That's the deal.

29.

The Other: We could go to the ocean.

The One: Too salty.

30.

The One: Do you hear footsteps?

The Other: No.

The One: Me neither.

31.

The One: If I were a flag...

The Other: You would still have to deal with the wind.

The One: North-northeast, south-southwest.

The Other: Never a mouse so small it doesn't feel like hiding, never an elephant so big it doesn't feel like trumpeting.

The One: I want to hang from a dome like a bat, I want to let the wind rise so that the ships reach their destination early, I want to whisper in the ears of the sailors that they have to go to the Equator one more time, I want to let the children be wiser than the parents, I want to let the scholars make little drawings of porcupines making love belly pressed against belly, I want to let the trees give more shade, I want to let the howling of the storm to go to the bone, I want to lose my balance, I want the sausages to burst in their skin, I want someone to come.

The Other: As long as we are here, someone could come.

The One: Every time we close our eyes, somebody slips past.

32.

The One: I have written a letter to the one-coming-in.

The Other: What have you?!

The One: Yes, I had enough of waiting, I wrote him a letter.

The Other: When?

The One: The other day.

The Other: And you sent it?

The One: Of course.

The One: To the One-coming-in

Considering we have spent our whole lives sitting here, doing our best, we would be more pleased than words can express to welcome you here once.

So far everything has been going very well. We have taken everything by turn, principles have been treated in a principal way. The value of a firm but fair approach has proven itself.

Never have we been tempted to kneel for the easiest way out, we have always kept the happiness of others in mind. We have never left out a single creature, everyone has been assured of our undivided attention.

Never have we mistaken a rabbit for a hare and never have we wished the fox a happy hunt without thinking of the pheasant as well. We have never allowed ourselves to be satisfied with less.

Here we are now, irreplaceable, peacefully awaiting the dawn of yet another day.

You would make our joy complete. We do not ask the impossible. Nevertheless it would be a turning point for us and of no insignificant importance.

With the kindest regards

The Other: And now what?

The One: Now he'll come.

The Other: You think so?

The One: Yes, now he knows.

The Other: And before, he didn't?

The One: Maybe he did, but if you have a lot on your mind...

The Other: It would be the first time.

The One: You deserve it.

The Other: I have only done my duty.

The One: More than that, you have done your best.

The Other: That's true, I have always demanded the impossible of myself.

The One: I have seen that.

The Other: I didn't know that.

The One: Yes, I could tell by your face.

The Other: I thought I was very closed.

The One: You're an open book.

The Other: Oh. And now it's going to change?

The One: Yes, everything is going to change.

The Other: At once or will it take some time?

The One: I don't know yet. Maybe both. A flash of joy to begin with, followed by silent wonders.

The Other: And we will be beautiful?

The One: Yes we will be beautiful, don't you see that the colour of the sky is changing? It can't be long now.

The Other: The air feels different too.

The One: Exactly, the air knows as well.

The Other: Will the animals know?

The One: Everybody will know, it is for everybody.

The Other: I didn't know that wonders were within reach.

The One: You have to know.

The Other: I didn't know.

The One: But now you do.

The Other: I thought that this was just another day, I didn't notice anything special.

The One: I saw it almost immediately.

The Other: Without you I never would have known.

The One: It doesn't matter, now it is a happy day and nothing whatsoever can change that.

33.

The Other: Like the calf drinking its mother's milk, like the bees reaching their destination. Every day is a day where the water flows a little further and where the stones in the river become a little rounder and smoother. The snail crosses the road effortlessly, its friends waiting at the other side.

(activities)(they clean the windows, change their clothes, give the whole house a total makeover, they slaughter a sheep and skin it, they lay out a new vegetable garden. or something else. then:)

34.

The Other: It is already a bit later.

The One: You are right, it is a little later.

The Other: You still think it's going to happen today?

The One: It has to be today.

The Other: Perhaps it was tomorrow?

The One: Impossible.

The Other: I don't feel anything.

The One: It's yet to happen then.

The Other: I am still the same.

The One: Not much longer.

35.

(The Other, on a ladder, paintroller in hand, ready to paint the whole house)

The Other: Nobody's ever going to come. I'm a failure.

The One: Why do you say that?

The Other: Because it's the truth.

The One: No.

The Other: Yes. I started hoping, I shouldn't have done that.

The One: It doesn't matter.

The Other: For you it doesn't.

The One: Somebody will show up.

The Other: Yesyes, every hundred years somebody shows up.

The One: It isn't a disaster.

The Other: I won't get up tomorrow, the world is better off without me.

The One: You mean a lot to the world.

The Other: No I don't.

The One: Think about the birds.

The Other: Ha, the birds, don't make me laugh. A hundred times I waved goodbye to them and never once did they look back. Not once.

The One: They are busy because of the cold. It's nothing personal.

The Other: It's too late. I quit.

The One: You shouldn't say that.

The Other: Then I won't say it. But it's still true.

The One: I want to say something to convince you.

The Other: There is nothing you can say.

The One: But there has to be something that can make you happy.

The Other: You would make me happy if you ate my dinner, it's wasted on me.

The One: Why are you like this all of a sudden?

The Other: All of sudden it's all clear to me.

The One: That was not the intention.

The Other: You should be happy about it. It is better to look truth straight in the face.

The One: It isn't the truth.

The Other: Of course it is. I feel it on my skin. It burns. Lovely.

The One: How do you see the future now then?

The Other: I don't. It's got nothing to do with me. The sun goes up, the sun goes down, it's not up to me anymore.

The One: And all that's left now is: The rest of your life.

The Other: Something like that.

The One: Don't you care anymore?

The Other: The point is, it doesn't matter whether I care or not.

The One: You're not going to do anything anymore then?

The Other: There's no need anymore.

It doesn't matter, the lights are out. The sea only makes waves out of habit. Everything that grows and blooms shall wither away. The birds let their wings hang. Nobody feels like flying anymore. The plants suck up a little water in their stems only to regret it halfway and let it go again. The motherfox listlessly licks her cubs but keeps forgetting one. The lions leave half eaten carcasses to rot on the savanna, gazing into the distance. It doesn't matter.

The bear longs for its winter sleep and ignores its mate even when she affectionately snuffles his belly. At the local fair the couples grab hold of each other for one more dance. But all they feel is wrinkled skin and when they look up again they find that they have all turned a hundred years old. The dog runs after the stick, wagging its tail, and when it returns its master is already in his coffin. A young schoolboy falls asleep at his desk and when he wakes up he stumbles over his beard.

It doesn't matter, all of it, it doesn't matter.

Sit in a chair, look outside. Forget everything. Don't remember anyone.

Don't interfere. When the cat catches the mouse: Congratulate the world on its inevitability.

Leave the humans, the war, the disasters, the snow, the footprints, the polar bears, the monstrous apes, the sodomites, the grave violators, the rapists, the judges, the scholars. Forget the songs, the instruments, the tools, the knowledge, the rake, the hammer, the saw, the scythe. Leave them be. Let them rust. Everything is falling, everything is falling apart. Let go of the trowel, don't pick it up. Build nothing. Pile not stone upon stone. Don't let the women know where the men are. Don't tell the men where the women are. Conceal from the children what way their parents went. Leave the dummy on the sidewalk. Leave the teddy bear in the puddle.

The canary in its cage. Leave the door open, close the door.

Like the waves wave, like the leaves leave, it's not important. The yeast is in the bread but the bread won't rise, the inventor has completed his invention but tells no one, the doctor sees the swelling as a shadow under the skin, but won't cut. The meat boils and boils but doesn't get tender, the seed lies in the ground and dries out. The cow lies down in its own dung and stares blindly at the wall, the pigs bite each other's ears off and spit them out on the ground. The children wake up crying from a nightmare and nobody comes to comfort them, they keep on crying in the dark.

The One: I had imagined a castle to shoot out of the ground here, palm trees. The palm trees loaded with coconuts, the coconuts full of juice. That the monkeys would hang from the trees by their much too long arms.

I thought, we would be carried off by a carriage, a crowd, a migration. We become one with the crowd and the crowd is heading straight for the sunset. I thought we would feel the warmth of a thousand human bodies, we would be a part of the enormous sigh of relief when the journey is

completed. And then we will lie down on the grass as part of this thousand-headed body, like petals in this immense bouquet of flowers. It didn't happen.

(The One leaves, The Other remains)

36.

(The Other alone)

37.

(The One comes back, sits down)

The One: I am the one-coming-in.

The Other: No.

The One: Yes.

The Other: I don't believe you.

The One: I am the one-coming-in.

The Other: Prove it.

The One: I was outside, now I' m inside.

The Other: Let me feel your hand.

The One: Take it. My hand is big and rough. It is the hand from outside.

The Other: What's it like outside?

The One: Cold.

The Other: Yes, ice and snow. The wind has swept past your hands a thousand times, I feel the wind at your hands.

The One: It is the wind from outside.

The Other: I am not someone to surrender quickly.

The One: But you have thought about me for a long time.

The Other: That's true.

The One: Whenever you looked up at the grey sky, whenever you saw footprints in the grass, you thought of me.

The Other: Even more. Whenever I washed my arms, I thought of you, whenever I had a drop of spit on my lip I thought of you, whenever I leaned forward and almost lost balance I thought of you. There hasn't been a day that I didn't think of you.

The One: Everything is totally different outside.

The Other: I knew it.

The One: Everybody keeps an eye on each other.

The Other: That's good.

The One: Nobody goes to bed feeling hungry.

The Other: I am glad to hear it.

The One: An aunt who has lost her son, gets a new one.

The Other: I am happy that they agree on that.

The One: You never hear about people not finding a way together.

Everywhere it's: Two for me and two for you.

The Other: It was always my secret dream that that was the way they did it.

The One: The girls wear candles in their hair, everybody sits on the first row.

The Other: And the second row?

The One: They got rid of it. A son dares to take his father by the hand, the wolf feeds the hare.

Everywhere where people come together they wish each other luck, love and many children. The monkeys can do math, in the eggs there is room for egg yolk and chick. The vegetables climb out of the soil, laughing, the chicken swims a round and then dives to the bottom of the soup pan. The

grapes press themselves to wine and afterwards they lie down in the sun hoping to become a raisin. Streams of elderberry juice wind through the landscape, the sheep can dance. In spring their wool falls of in the shape of a coat, ready to put on. The children know the books by heart, the dog lets the cat ride on it's back. The mouse blushes as the cat looks at it with a twinkle in its eye.

The sick instantly get better when the nurses break into song, all languages are easy to understand. The water jumps into the bucket when you stand next to the pump. The sea is friendly and takes you back to the shore when you have swum to far. All birds know the national anthem and the loom makes clothes and laughs all the while. All wounds are superficial, the words in a sentence join together according to the local grammar. When it snows, the snowflakes are big and soft and the snow stays for a long time and all of a sudden it disappears, leaving room for spring and new flowers. The ladybugs grow very old.

The Other: I knew it, I knew it all.

The One: That's what I came to tell you.

The Other: I am forever grateful to you.

The One: It will never get dull.

The Other: I believe you.

The One: It is a thousand year kingdom full of love and happiness.

The Other: My heart swells with joy.

The One: And just now I was outside but I didn't come alone.

The Other: Oh no?

The One: No, all mankind has come with me.

The Other: Are you serious?

The One: Yes, they were somewhere behind me and now they are on their way.

The Other: My heart is pounding from what you tell me.

The One: Just wait, they will be here any minute.

The Other: How come I didn't know of such good news.

The One: They have been keeping it secret, it was supposed to be a surprise.

The Other: That explains a thing or two.

The One: Now everything that remains is joy and happiness, in a moment you can hold them in your arms.

The Other: Oh, my heart is bubbling with delight. They haven't forgot about us.

The One: They have been thinking about us.

The Other: They have sensed it. They know about us.

The One: And now they are on their way.

The Other: I am almost fainting.

The One: And they are welcome.

The Other: Welcome they are.

The One: After all these years.

The Other: At last.

The One: We are going to see them.

The Other: We are going to see them, they are going to see us.

The One: We are going to see each other and we will embrace each other.

The Other: I shall ask them how they are, how the harvest has been this year.

The One: Whether the grain was high.

The Other: Whether the chickens have been laying.

The One: I'm blushing, I'll go and look for my pearls. Pearls for my hair and for my neck. Pearls everywhere.

The Other: And feathers. Beautiful blue feathers in a necklace. My best dress and my shawl. The pretty shawl for around my shoulders.

I shall be aristocratic though not too distant. I shall inspire respect, but I'll be gentle and say: "Come, come over here. Shake my hand in gratitude, but know, that without you, I too, would be no one. Yes, you need me, but I, how absurd it may seem, I need you too. Without the welfare of mankind my existence would be empty. I would have no reason to greet the sun, the newborn rabbits would be meaningless. The grass would grow without purpose; the seasons, light, darkness, everything would be pointless. An empty existence in a hollow universe.

Come, little mankind, sit on my lap, play with my hair. Let me hear your laughter. You innocent creature, you unsuspecting, in a world full of cruel

knowledge. Let me enjoy your innocent games, let me watch as you run through the field waving at me in the distance. I shall indulge in you, quietly but intense. You don't know, but from your careless youth I drink the courage to go on for another thousand years. Without you I would be nothing but a shrivelled, dried-up plum; only a peel, waiting to be thrown away, die out, disappear. I would just be a small dirty stain on the world's face.

Oh, mankind, enter and let me shake your hands, let me embrace you, let us unite in endless love and unselfish being.”

The One: Have they come?

The Other: No, not yet. I expect them any minute, any second, my hands are trembling, my heart is beating. I am a thousand years, I am just a year old. Oh oh oh, this is the most wonderful moment of my life. I could never have hoped for something like this.

The One: How do I look?

The Other: You look like a bride the moment before saying “I do”, pure but full of promises of pleasure. Your lips are moist, your heart is ready and almost visible through your dress. You are light as a bird and fresh as the dew. Perhaps a lily? A lily for in your hair? Go and make yourself ready for the most wonderful day of our lives. The fulfilment of our destiny. The time of the great meaning has begun and we are going to experience it. It will happen in our time.

The One: I shall go and put another flower in my hair. A lily. I want to be beautiful, beautiful on this day.

The Other: Go and come back quickly.

(The One comes back)

The Other: Come come and let us sit down, let us take our seats. We shall be beautiful, we shall be overwhelming, we shall fulfil promises, we shall pay attention.

(they are waiting)

(silence)

38.

The One: What is new?

The Other: Nothing much. Two swallows passed by yesterday. They knew the way very well.

39.

The One: The sun is about to go down.

40.

The One: And the animals?

The Other: The animals will manage. The animals will always be there.

The One: Are you sure?

The Other: I am absolutely sure.

41.

The One: What will come?

The Other: Nothing new.

The One: It doesn't have to be new. Old is all right, old is good enough.

42.

(eyes closed)

The One: I see the humans feeling cold.

The Other: What is the matter with you? It isn't cold. Feel for yourself.

Not cold at all, is it?

The One: And the children too.

The Other: Go and sit next to each other. Closer. Your breath. Your breath in the room. That is something beautiful, isn't it? And warm? Don't you see? Good.