



ELLENDÉ



UNINTENTIONAL



CONSEQUENCES

Aan:  
A.M.L 1943 ~  
M.L.B 1943 ~ 1997  
W.B 1967 ~ 1995  
S.B 1944 ~

*Naby aan die einde van 1975 vlieg ek saam met my moeder Kaapstad toe om by haar niggie, my tante Marie-Louise, te gaan kuier. Daardie jaar sou ons die Kersvakansie en my verjaarsdag by hulle deurbring – my eerste buite Europa. Marie-Louise het ’n seun met die naam Wim gehad. Hy was, soos ek, ’n enigste kind en het die vorige somer my beste vriend geword. Ek was ’n jaar ouer as Wim, maar ons het dieselfde verjaarsdag (eerste Januarie) gehad. Ek onthou nie veel van die vlug nie, behalwe dat ek nie daarvan gehou het nie omdat dit gevoel het of dit vir ewig aanhou. Ons is ’n paar keer oorgeplaas en het die kajuit besoek, waar ’n vlieënier vir ons die rekenaarmonitors gewys het.*

*Marie-Louise het haar man, Stiaan, in Nederland ontmoet deur ’n vriend van haar oorheersende en patriargale vader, Matthijs. Na ’n kort hofmakery het hulle ’n plan gemaak. Nadat Stiaan sy wateringenieurswese-graad aan Delft Universiteit voltooi het, sou hy en Marie-Louise per motor (’n splinternuwe Land Rover) van Nederland na Suid-Afrika reis. Ongelukkig is die motor in Parys gesteel en daarom het hulle nooit die reis oor land gemaak nie. Dit was die verhaal wat ek geken het.*

*Om redes wat nie die moeite werd is om te noem nie, het my moeder en Marie-Louise altyd in Frans met mekaar gepraat. As kind het ek nie Frans verstaan nie, en daarom het ek nie daarvan gehou wanneer hulle die taal gepraat het nie. Afrikaans was egter ’n ander storie. Wim het ons die eerste keer rondom Kersfees besoek toe ons 3 en 4 jaar oud was. Ek kan dit nie onthou nie, maar toe ons Kaapstad in 1975 besoek, het ons ’n paar 8-mm-tuisfliëks gekyk wat Stiaan geneem het. Dit was duidelik dat ons mekaar se geselskap geniet het. Op die skerm het Wim “Pindakaas!” geskree, en ek het “Grondboontjebotter!” in reaksie geskree. Dit was die eerste Afrikaanse woord wat ek geleer het: grondboontjebotter. Ek het die woord elke keer geskree wanneer ek vir Wim gesien het, tot sy groot vreugde. Wanneer ons ook al deur die jare ontmoet het, het ons voortgegaan om ’n mengsel van Afrikaans en Nederlands, wat linguistiese nefies is, te praat. Ek hou nog steeds daarvan om daardie paar woorde in daardie pragtige, rou Afrikaans te sê.*

*Op ons tweede dag in Afrika het ek en Wim in die swembad gespeel tot ons heeltemal uitgeput was. My moeder het geweet dat ek en hy in die nag sou*

*aangaan om te speel, en daarom het sy my na hââr kamer verskuif sodat ek kon slaap. Ek en sy het wakker gelê in die bed en gesels oor hoe ver ons van die huis af was. Ons het gesels oor ons hond Lucky en wat hy miskien nou gedoen het (ons het hom by my oupa en ouma gelos). Wim het hom Bliksem genoem. Ek was daardie nag nege jaar oud. Oor twee weke sou ek tien word, en ek was baie opgewonde om weer vir Wim te sien. Hy het ’n swembad, klimbare bome en baie honde gehad – al my gunsteling dinge op daardie stadium.*

*Ek weet nie hoekom sy dit toe wou vertel nie, maar daar in die donker het my moeder vir my die ware storie oor die Land Rover vertel (sy het dit “die Jeep” genoem). Dit is nooit in Parys gesteel nie, het sy gesê en stilgebly. Ek onthou nog hoe ek daar in die donkerte van die gastekamer in Marie-Louise se huis gelê het: die hoë, gewelfde houtplafon, die waaier wat gons, en die dik gordyne wat al die lig uitblik. Die Land Rover-storie, het sy aangegaan, was ’n leuen – ’n storie wat saamgeflans is om die feit dat Marie-Louise byna geweier het om Europa te verlaat, te verdoesel. Een aand nadat sy en Stiaan ’n onderonsie gehad het oor wat om te eet, het Marie-Louise (poedelnaak, het my moeder volgehou) deur die strate van Parys gehardloop, met Stiaan wat agterna gehardloop het (in sy slaapklore). Reën het die geplaveide straat glad gemaak, en sy het hard geval en haar bene baie seergemaak. Ek onthou dat ek die volgende dag die litteken op haar knie gesien het toe sy in haar bikini by die swembad gesit het. Toe sy val, het ’n polisieman wat daar naby was haar gehelp en sy jas om haar toegedraai. (My moeder het my vertel dat sy van mans in uniform hou nadat ons die stuurkajuit besoek het.) Sy het verder verduidelik dat Stiaan (wat nie Frans gepraat het nie) gearresteer is omdat die polisie gedink het die jaagtog is die gevolg van huishoudelike mishandeling.*

*Voordat dit alles gebeur het, het Marie-Louise my moeder gebel en paniekbevange geklink. Sy het my moeder gesmeek om haar te kom haal. Sy wou nie met Stiaan trou nie, het sy gesê. Haar besluit was finaal. Sy was nie lief vir hom nie en dit was alles ’n fout. Die huwelik is op haar afgedwing deur Matthijs, haar outoritêre vader. Sy het gedink dat hy net van haar wou ontslae raak.*

*Jare later, ’n paar dae na Wim se begrafnis, het my moeder my die res van die storie vertel. In haar vroeë tienerjare was Marie-Louise in ’n verhouding met die gesin se tennisafrigter. (My moeder het nie van sport gehou nie). Sy naam was Jan-iets (Jan-Pieter of Jan-Klaas) en hy was ’n bruingebrande, aantreklike losbol wat aanglipskoene gedra het (my moeder se woorde). Hy was ook getroud en twee keer Marie-Louise se ouderdom. Die twee het byna nege jaar lank ’n verhouding gehad, waartydens Marie-Louise ’n taamlike goeie tennisspeler geword het en in baie Europese stede aan semi-professionele toernooie deelgeneem het. Tydens daardie toernooie het hulle gereis en die hele dag saam spandeer (in mekaar se arms vir ure aaneen, soos my moeder dit beskryf het). Die afrigter het ’n seldsame siekte*

To:  
A.M.L 1943 ~  
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Near the end of 1975, I flew to Cape Town to meet with my mother to visit her cousin, my aunt Marie-Louise. That year we would spend the Christmas holiday and my birthday with them — my first outside of Europe. Marie-Louise had a son named Wim. He was an only child like me and had become my best friend during a visit the previous summer. I was a year older than Wim, but we shared the same birthday (January first). I don’t remember much of the flight except that I didn’t like it because it seemed to take forever. We transferred a few times and visited the cockpit, where a pilot pointed out the computer monitors.

Marie-Louise had met her husband Stiaan in the Netherlands through a friend of her overbearing and patriarchal father, Matthijs. After a brief courtship, they made a plan. After Stiaan graduated from Delft University (where he studied water engineering), he and Marie-Louise would travel by car (a brand new Land Rover) from the Netherlands to South Africa. Unfortunately, the car was stolen in Paris, so they never made the trip overland. That was the story I knew.

For reasons I can’t be bothered to get into detail, my mother and Marie-Louise always spoke in French to each other. I didn’t understand French as a child, so I quickly grew to dislike when they spoke the language. Afrikaans, however, was a different story. Wim first visited us around Christmas when we were 3 and 4 years old. I don’t remember it, but when we visited Cape Town in 1975 we watched some 8mm home movies that Stiaan had taken. It was obvious that we enjoyed each other’s company. On the screen, Wim shouted “Pindakaas!” and I responded with “Grondboontjebotter!” This was the first Afrikaans word I learned: peanut butter. I hurled the word at Wim every time we met, much to his delight. Whenever we met over the years, we continued to speak a mix of Afrikaans and Dutch, which are linguistic cousins. I still love saying those few words in that beautiful, raw Afrikaans.

On our second day in Africa, Wim and I had exhausted ourselves playing in the pool. My mother knew that he and I would continue playing into the night, so she moved me to her room so that I would

get some sleep. She and I laid awake in bed, talking about how far we were from home. We talked about our dog Lucky and what he might be doing now (we had left him with my grandparents). Wim called him Bliksem (Lightning). I was nine years old that night. In two weeks I would turn ten, and I was thrilled to see Wim again. He had a pool, climbable trees, and lots of dogs — all of my favourite things at that time.

I don’t know why she decided to reveal it then, but there in the dark, my mother told me the real story behind the Land Rover (she called it “the Jeep”). It was never stolen in Paris, she said and paused. I still remember lying there in the dark of the guest bungalow in Marie-Louise’s house: the high vaulted wooden ceiling, the fan whirring away, and the thick curtains blocking out any ambient light. The Land Rover story she continued, was a lie — a story constructed to cover up the fact that Marie-Louise nearly refused to leave Europe. One night after she and Stiaan had an argument about what to eat, Marie-Louise had run (stark naked, my mother insisted) through the streets of Paris, with Stiaan running after her (in his pyjamas) Rain had made the cobblestone street slippery, and she had fallen hard, banging up her legs. I remember seeing the scar on her knee the next day as she sat by the pool in her bikini. When she fell, a policeman nearby helped her up and wrapped his coat around her. (My mother liked men in uniform she had told me after we visited the cockpit.) She went on to explain that Stiaan (who didn’t speak French) was arrested because the police thought the chase was a result of domestic abuse.

Before all this happened, Marie-Louise had called my mother in a panic. She begged my mother to come and pick her up. She did not want to marry Stiaan, she said. Her mind was made up. She did not love him and it was all a mistake. The marriage had been forced upon her by Matthijs, her authoritarian father. He just wanted to get rid of her, she thought.

Years later, a few days after Wim’s funeral, my mother told me the rest of the story. In her early teens, Marie-Louise was in a relationship with the family tennis instructor. (My mother didn’t like sports). His name was Jan-something (Jan-Pieter or Jan-Klaas) and he was a loafer wearing, tanned, handsome playboy (my mother’s words). He was also married and twice Marie-Louise’s age. The two kept a relationship for nearly nine years, during which Marie-Louise became a fairly good tennis player, participating in semi-professional tournaments in many European cities. During those tournaments, they traveled and spent all day together (in each other’s arms for hours on end, as my mother described it). The coach had a rare disease in his knee, which forced him to stop playing tennis. He went to Sweden for a series of operations and then remained in and out of Stockholm hospitals for



*in sy knie gehad, wat hom gedwing het om op te hou tennis speel. Hy is na Swede vir ’n reeks operasies en was toe byna twee jaar in en uit Stockholm-hospitale weens komplikasies. Dit was op daardie tydstip wat Marie-Louise se vader Stiaan aan haar voorgestel het. Matthijs het al ’n geruime tyd van sy dogter se affair geweet, maar niemand behalwe my moeder het geweet hoe lank hulle saam was nie. Sy weet nie presies hoe Matthijs Stiaan geken het nie, maar die tennisafrigter was die seun van iemand wat Matthijs deur sy werk geken het.*

*Die dag voordat Marie-Louise kaal deur die strate van Parys gehardloop het, bel sy my moeder. My tannie was in ’n kroeg en wou nie teruggaan na die hotel nie. Sy het onbedaarlik gehuil, en gesê dat sy nie wou trou nie en nie na Afrika wou gaan nie. My moeder kon die besorgdheid van mense in die agtergrond hoor en vir Marie-Louise wat vir hulle gesê het om haar uit te los. Sy het my moeder gesmeek om haar te kom haal. “Kan jy nie net hierheen ry nie?” het sy het gevra, “Dit sal nie te lank vat nie.” Al moes my moeder elke dag rondry, meestal in die stad, het sy ’n intense vrees gehad, amper ’n fobie, om op snelweë te ry.*

*Twee maande voor my geboorte is my vader in ’n motorfietsongeluk dood. As gevolg hiervan, het die gedagte om op ’n snelweg te ry my moeder histeries gemaak. Sy het dit nie gesê nie, maar om Marie-Louise op te laai, sou sy verby die plek waar my vader gesterf het, moes ry. Die storie van my vader se dood is nooit in meer as ’n paar sinne aan my vertel nie. Hy het die oggend werk toe gery. Dit was mistig. Daar was ’n vragmotor in die straat geparkeer, maar hy het dit glad nie gesien nie. Hy het reguit daarin vasgerly en die impak het sy kop vergruis. Een keer, toe ons na ’n fliek gekyk het, het sy my vertel dat dokters waarskynlik probeer het om sy kopbeen te verwyder tydens ’n operasie, maar dit het nie gewerk nie. Hy was weg. Iemand het later gespekuleer dat die vragmotorbestuurder eers ná die ongeluk sy ligte aangeskakel het.*

*My vader is later daardie dag oorlede. Gedurende my lewe het ons nog nooit na hom op sy voornaam (wat dieselfde is as myne) verwys nie. Hy word altyd aangespreek as “vader” en ons gebruik woorde soos “my” en “jou” afhangende van wie praat. Ek onthou ’n saamgevoegde foto wat ons van hom gehad het – sy gesig is by die hoek van ’n prent ingesit, terwyl hy na sy vrou en pasgeborene seun kyk.*

*Die dag nadat Marie-Louise my moeder paniekbevange gebel het, het Matthijs Parys toe gery met sy Citroen CX. Ek weet nie hoe hy uitgevind wat gebeur het nie, maar ek kan myself net indink hoe hy op die snelweg jaag met sy blou strepiespak aan wat hy altyd gedra het. Hy is reguit na die polisiekantoor toe en het Stiaan uitgekry. Alhoewel hy Nederlands was, het Matthijs Frans gepraat wat so foutloos was soos sy pak. Marie-Louise was terug by die hotel en het saam met my moeder oor die telefoon gehuil. Binne ’n dag het Matthijs Marie-Louise gedwing om by die plan te hou en met*

*Stiaan te trou. Hy het by hulle in Parys gebly en die telefoonrekening (wat astronomies was) betaal. Toe vlieg hy saam met hulle na Johannesburg (waar Stiaan se ouers gewoon het) en het aan haar sy gebly totdat ’n verhaaste en vereenvoudigde huweliksplegtigheid verby was. Net Marie-Louise se moeder en jonger broer het dit bygewoon. Ek was net ’n paar maande oud, so my moeder kon nie gaan nie. Die dag na die troue het Matthijs teruggekeer huis toe en Suid-Afrika nooit weer besoek nie. Hy het in 1998 op 95-jarige ouderdom gesterf (begrawe in ’n strepiespak).*

*My moeder het geglo dat sy verantwoordelik was daarvoor dat Marie-Louise se lewe verwoes is omdat sy nie daardie dag Parys toe gery het nie. Miskien sou sy haar kon help. Miskien sou sy Stiaan kon oortuig om in Europa te bly. Miskien, maar sy kon nie alleen op daardie pad gery het nie, en om langs iemand soos Matthijs te sit, sou nog erger gewees het (hy draai altyd na jou toe as hy bestuur. Hy kyk jou in die oë as hy bestuur. Dit is skrikwekkend). Sy het nie gegaan nie en het sedertdien verlamrende skuldgevoelens daaroor ervaar. Sy het my daardie aand in 1975 vertel van die Marie-Louise-penarie en haar eie skuldgevoel. Sy het my ook vertel dat Marie-Louise meer as een keer probeer het om haarself om die lewe te bring (sy het pille gedrink, maar hulle het haar altyd betyds gevind. Nou word sy nooit alleen gelaat nie). Daardie Kersfees was my moeder se tweede besoek aan Suid-Afrika. Die eerste besoek was ná ’n vroeëre selfmoordpoging.*

*Ek weet nie hoekom sy dit alles daardie aand vir my vertel het nie. Miskien het sy ook nie geweet hoekom nie. Miskien was dit net om haar kop skoon te kry of om ontslae te raak van spyt- en skuldgevoelens. Sy het die skuldgevoelens beskryf as ’n slegte smaak in haar mond. Dit was dit elke keer geproe as sy daaraan dink. Een manier om van die smaak ontslae te raak, is om te probeer vergeet (en dan spoedig daarna vergeet). ’n Ander manier is om die las op iemand anders te plaas. Sy het laat die aand hierdie bekende persoon se deur oopmaak en weerskante van ’n kamer wat so donker was as ’n kelder, sy my vertel. Tog was gesprekke soos hierdie nie so donker as die kamer nie. Al baie keer vertel hoe my vader my vertel. “Ek kan jou hierdie dinge vertel, want ek was al baie keer in die donker kant van daardie donker kamer. Ek kan jou vertel, want ons is ’n familie.”*

*Sy het my al voorheen van haar moeder vertel. Sy het my vertel dat sy het ek ook al gevoel hoe emosioneel agter my was. Sy het my vertel dat sy gereeld gesien nie, maar wanneer ons haar gesien het, was sy altyd soseer gereeld gesien nie, maar wanneer ons haar gesien het, was sy altyd soseer gereeld gesien nie. Sy was ’n klein vrou wat al haar geld op haar moeder se rekening in haar woonstelblok het haar Die Barones genoem. Sy het my vertel wat ek van haar kan onthou, was dat dit gelyk het of sy nie lippe gehad het nie. Dit het gelyk asof haar gesig in haar mond ingetrek is. Om op te maak daarvoor, het sy lippe met lipstiffie opgeverf. Vir my het dit soos rooi*

*almost two years due to complications. It was during that time that Marie-Louise’s father had introduced Stiaan. Matthijs had known about his daughter’s affair for some time, but no one knew how long they had been together beside my mother. She don’t know exactly how Matthijs knew Stiaan, but the tennis coach was the son of someone who knew Matthijs through work.*

*The day before Marie-Louise ran naked through the streets of Paris, she called my mother. My aunt was in a bar and didn’t want to return to the hotel. Sobbing uncontrollably, she said that she didn’t want to get married and she did not want to go to Africa. My mother could hear the concern of people in the background and Marie-Louise telling them to leave her alone. She begged my mother to come and pick her up. “Can’t you just drive here?” she asked, “It won’t take too long.” Although my mother drove on a daily basis, mostly with in city, she had an intense fear, almost a phobia of driving on highways.*

*Two months before I was born, my father died in a motorcycle accident. As a result, the thought of driving on a highway terrified my mother to the point of hysteria. She didn’t say it, but the route to pick up Marie-Louise would have passed right by where my father was killed. The story of my father’s death was never told to me in more than a few sentences. He left for work in the morning. It was foggy. There was a lorry parked on the street, but he didn’t see it. He drove straight into it, the impact crushing his head. Once when we were watching a movie, she told me that doctors had probably tried to remove his skull cap during an operation, but it didn’t work. He was gone. Someone suggested later that the lorry driver only switched his lights on after the accident.*

*My father died later that day. During my life we have never referred to him by his given name (which is the same as mine). Instead, he is always addressed as “father,” using words like “my” and “your” depending on who’s talking. I remember a composite picture we had of him —his face added to the corner of an image, looking down towards his wife and newborn son.*

*The day after Marie-Louise called my mother in a panic, Matthijs drove to Paris in his Citroen CX. I don’t know how he found out what was happening, but I can picture him speeding down the highway in the blue pinstripe suit he was always wearing. He went straight to the police station and got Stiaan out. Although Dutch, Matthijs spoke French that was as flawless as his suit. Marie-Louise was back at the hotel, crying into the phone with my mother. Within a day, Matthijs had coerced Marie-Louise to stick to the plan and marry Stiaan. He stayed with them in Paris and paid for the phone bill (which was astronomical). Then he flew with them to Johannesburg (where*

*Stiaan’s parents lived) and remained by her side until an expedited and simplified wedding ceremony was over. Only Marie-Louise’s mother and younger brother attended. I was only a few months old, so my mother couldn’t go. The day after the wedding Matthijs returned home, and never visited South Africa again. He died (buried in a pinstripe suit) in 1998 at the age of 95.*

*My mother believed that she was responsible for ruining Marie-Louise’s life because she didn’t drive to Paris that day. Maybe she could have helped her. Maybe she could have convinced Stiaan to stay in Europe. Maybe, but she couldn’t drive that road alone, and sitting next to someone like Matthijs would have been even worse (He always turns to face you when he’s driving. He looks you in the eyes when he drives. It’s terrifying). She didn’t go and felt crippling guilt about it ever since. She told me about Marie-Louise predicament and her own guilt that night in 1975. She also told me that Marie-Louise had tried to kill herself more than once (She’d take pills, but they always found her in time. Now she is never left alone). That Christmas was my mother’s second visit to South Africa. The first visit was after an earlier suicide attempt.*

*I don’t know why she told me all this that night. Maybe she didn’t know why either. Perhaps it was just to clear her mind or to expunge feelings of regret and guilt. She described the guilt as a bad taste in her mouth, and she tasted it every time she thought about it. One way to get rid of feelings like this is to try and forget (and it haunts your dreams). Another way is to lay the burden on someone else, to dislodge the feelings through words like one does with a psychiatrist or a priest. I received her confession late that night, our beds on opposite sides of a room so dark that I couldn’t see her. Yet conversations like this were not strange to me. My mother had told me many times how my father’s death had brought us closer. “I can tell you these things,” her disembodied voice said, across that dark room on the other side of the world. “I can tell you because we are a different kind of family.”*

*She had told me about her mother before. Even at a young age, I too had felt how emotionally distant my grandmother was. I did not see her often, but when we visited she would never say much. She was a small woman who spent all of her money on clothes (she was referred to as The Baroness by the people in the apartment where she lived). The only thing I can recall of her was that she didn’t appear to have lips. Her face seemed to be pulled into her mouth. To compensate, she painted on lips with lipstick. To me, it just looked like red smears across her face. My mother never received much love from her parents. Apart from being talkative, Matthijs had a similar personality to my maternal grandmother: cold, controlling, and distant.*



*smere oor haar gesig gelyk. My moeder het nooit baie liefde van haar ouers ontvang nie. Behalwe dat hy spraaksaam was, het Matthijs 'n soortgelyke persoonlikheid as my ouma aan my moederskant gehad: koud, kontrolerend en afsydig.*

Vandag versoem baie volwassenes hul kinders met liefde. Is dit'n onlangse verskynsel? Ek dink nie. Probeer ouers vergoed vir die intimiteit wat hulle as kinders ontvang het? Wat ontken is? Het my moeder dit ook gedoen? Sy het nooit. Haar vader was immers ook haar man verloor voordat hul enigste kind gebore is. Sy het net soos almal van ons tyd 'n vertroueling nodig gehad. My moeder het 'n baie moeilike vertroulike ingligting met my gedeel, soos wat die meeste vrouens met hulle mans sou doen. Sy het haar lewenslang haar vrese gedeel, soos haar angs vir bestuur, en haar eie negatiewe lukrake negatiewe gedagtes is nooit gefilter nie. Sy het haarself gereeld gekasty oor haar rokery en gebrek aan verantwoordelijkheidswilskrag. (Ek sal teen 40 sterf aan kanker. Net soos jou ma). Sy was 'n goepa. Hy is dood toe ek 17 was. Ek moes by sy sterfbed sit.) Dan was daar die ewe lukrake waarnemings (Vat Stiaan se hande om te lank om sy gesig te skeer nie?). Sy het ons meegedeel waarvan sy gehou het (Kyk hoe mooi is hierdie swart mense!) en waarvan sy nie gehou het nie (Ek haat Mercedes-motors!). Daar was haar hoop vir die toekoms (Eendag sal ons in 'n groot huis woon) en bowenal was daar familiegeheime (Het jy geweet oom George slaap al vir die afgelope ses maande nie by sy huis nie?).

Ek is toegelaat om die volgende aand in Wim se kamer te slaap, en ek het van Parys gedroom. Ek het die stad net geken van die Alain Delon-fliks wat my moeder gekyk het (Hy is te mooi. Dit maak hom gehaat, en daarom is hy so aantreklik). In my droom sien ek Marie-Louise, kaal en kaalvoet. Sy hardloop, sweef amper bokant die blink geplaveide strate. Ek sien hoe haar nat swart hare aan haar wange vaskleef en die harde spiere van haar lang bene. Haar skaamhare is so donker soos die Parys-nag. Maar in hierdie droom is dit ek wat agter haar aanhardloop (en tot my verleentheid is ek ook kaal). Alhoewel ek hulle nie sien nie, weet ek dat die polisie êrens naby is en my jaag. Dan sien ek my moeder met haar wit handsak in 'n openbare toilet, haar gesig bleek in die spieël. Sy rook senuweeagtig, en dit lyk asof sy gehuil het. Die mure, vloer en plafon om haar is geteël. Wit teëls in 'n koelkamer. Die lig is helder en metaalagtig. Alles wat my moeder dra is wit: wit baadjie, wit romp en wit leerstewels. Dit is asof sy gekamoefleer is, desperaat om met die wit-geteelde kamer saam te smelt. Marie-Louise lê soos 'n lyk op die vloer. Dit is asof ek Marie-Louise vir die eerste keer sien, asof ek haar opnuut sien. Sy lyk so mooi. Ek voel 'n vreemde spanning in my kop en maag en die spiere van my bene begin ruk. Dan verander die droom en my moeder is weg (of dalk net onsigbaar teen die mure?) en skielik is ek terug waar ek deur die strate hardloop. Maar hierdie keer verander die straatklippe in groot modderklonte en my voete val daarin vas. Ek probeer

*myself uittrek, maar hoe meer ek trek, hoe meer ingebed raak ek. My voete voel ongelooflik swaar, en my kop ook. Dit druk my afwaarts en in die grond. Ek sink al hoe dieper in die modder. Warm en sag, dit suig my verder in, en daar is geen einde daaraan nie. Ek voel 'n verskriklike druk op my kop – nie pyn nie, maar gewig. Ek kan nie asemhaal nie en dan word ek skielik wakker.*

Wim het nie wakker geword nie, maar my moeder is daar en sy hou my vas. Sy sê die huishulp het my gevind waar ek in die gang buite Wim se kamer geloop het. 'n Dokter word ingeroep. Dit het heeltyd gereën, en die dokter dra steeds sy nat baadjie terwyl hy in my keel kyk. Hy dra 'n dik bri en ruik na sigare. Die vloei-bare medisyn wat hy vir my gee, smaak soos drop. Hy sê dat ek 'n soort keelinfeksie het en vertrek vyf minute later. Hy beveel aan dat ek rus, maar ek sukkel om wakker te bly, want die oomblik as ek my oë toemaak, is ek bang dat ek weer in die modder gaan insak. Oor die algemeen was ek as kind nie baie veeleisend nie, maar die gebrek aan slaap het gemaak dat ek soos 'n kranksinnige opgetree het. Terwyl ek siek was, het ek Marie-Louise nooit persoonlik gesien nie, maar sy was elke aand in my herhalende nagmerries. Gedurende my tweede nag van koorsdrome het my moeder die kamer verlaat en ek het skreeuend wakker geword. Ek staan op om die kamer te verlaat op dieselfde oomblik as wat my moeder die deur oopswaai, wat toe my toon kap. Ek skree van pyn maar dit was waarskynlik meer te wyte aan die gebrek aan slaap. Die dokter kom terug met verbande. Die toon is nie gebreek nie, maar die dokter verduidelik dat die nael gaan afval.

*Ek is op Kersdag nog siek, en die volgende dag begin Wim dieselfde simptome toon. Teen die tyd dat ek uiteindelik beter voel en die drome ophou, is dit Wim se beurt om in die bed te bly. My stukkende toon beteken dat ek nie kan swem of bome klim nie. Die honde is ook weg, en ek het die een boek wat ek saamgebring het, al twee keer gelees. Stiaan bied my ander boeke aan, maar hulle is in Afrikaans en te moeilik vir my om te lees. Boonop het my ma moeder besluit dat dit te lastig sou wees om my verjaardagsgeskenk dwarsoor die wêreld te dra, so die groot fort wag my tuis in. Ek is onbeskryflik verveeld.*

*n Paar dae gaan verskriklik stadig verby, en binnekort sou dit tyd wees om terug te keer huis toe. Ek en Wim het albei beter gevoel, maar Wim was nog steeds nie toegelaat om uit sy bed op te staan nie, en toe sit ons saam daar met die draagbare bandopnemers wat Stiaan ons vir ons verjaarsdae gegee het. Dit was laat in die middag en ons het elke album wat ek in die huis kon kry, opgeneem en die een oor die ander oorgeklank (met onopvallende resultate). “Ek hou van jou ma,” het Wim gesê toe hy na ’n voorblad van Nana Mouskouri se grootste treffers kyk. “Ek hou nie van myne nie en ek dink ook nie sy hou van my of Papa nie. Net jou ma.”*

*“Ek weet,” het ek gesê. En toe vertel ek hom die storie van sy ouers in Parys.*

Today many adults smother their children with love. Is this a recent phenomenon? Are parents trying to compensate for the intimacy they were denied as children? Was my mother doing this, too? After all, she had also lost her husband before their only child was born. She needed a confidant as much as anyone. My mother confided in me the way most women might with their husbands. She shared her fears, like her terror of driving, and her random negative thoughts were never filtered. She castigated herself regularly about smoking and her lack of willpower. (I'll die of cancer by 40. Just like your grandfather. He died when I was 17. I had to sit by his deathbed.) Then there were the equally haphazard observations (Isn't Stiaan taking too long to shave his face?). She reported on what she liked (Look how beautiful these black people are!) and what she didn't (I hate Mercedes cars!). There were her hopes for the future (One day we'll live in a large house.) and above all, there were family secrets (Did you know that Uncle Georges hasn't slept at home for the past six months?).

I was allowed to sleep in Wim's room the following night, and I dreamed of Paris. I only knew the city from the Alain Delon movies my mother watched (He is too beautiful. That makes him hateful, which is why he is so attractive). In my dream, I see Marie-Louise, naked and barefoot. She is running, almost hovering above the shiny cobbled streets. I see her wet black hair stuck to her cheeks and the hard muscles of her long legs. Her pubic hair is as dark as the Paris night. Yet in this dream, I am the one running after her (and to my embarrassment, I am naked as well). Although I don't see them, I know that the police are somewhere close, chasing me. Then I see my mother with her white handbag in a public toilet, her face pale in the mirror. She is smoking nervously, and it looks like she has been crying. The walls, the floor, and ceiling surrounding her are tiled. White tile. A cold room. The light is bright and metallic. My mother is wearing all white: white jacket, white skirt, and white leather boots. It's as if she is camouflaged, desperate to blend in to that white tiled room. Marie-Louise is lying on the floor like a corpse. It is if I am seeing Marie-Louise for the first time, like I'm seeing her anew. She looks so beautiful. I feel a weird tension in my head, stomach and muscles of my legs twinge. Then the dream shifts and my mother is gone (or perhaps just invisible against

the walls?) and suddenly I'm back running through the streets. Yet this time the cobblestones turn into big clumps of mud and my feet get stuck in them. I try to pull myself out, but the more I pull, the more embedded I become. My feet feel incredibly heavy, and so does my head. It weighs me down, pushing me into the ground. I sink deeper and deeper in the mud. Warm and soft, it sucks me in further, and there is no end to it. I feel an enormous pressure on my head — not pain, but weight. I can't breathe and then suddenly I wake up. Wim did not wake up, but my mother is there and she holds me. She says the maid found me walking down the corridor outside of Wim's room. A doctor is called in. It's been raining constantly, and the doctor is still wearing his wet jacket as he looks into my throat. He has thick glasses and smells of cigars. The liquid medicine he gives me tastes like licorice. Five minutes later he leaves, telling us that I have some kind of throat infection. He recommends that I rest but I struggle to stay awake because the moment I close my eyes I fear sinking into the mud again. In general, I was a fairly low-maintenance child, but the lack of sleep made me behave like I was insane. While I was sick, I never saw Marie-Louise in person, but she was in my recurring nightmares every night. During my second night of fever dreams, my mother left the room and I woke up screaming. I get up to leave the room just as my mother swings open the door, which bangs into my toe. I scream in pain but it's probably due more to the lack of sleep. The doctor returns with bandages. The toe isn't broken, but the doctor explains that the nail will come off.

I am still sick on Christmas Day, and on the following day, Wim starts to show the same symptoms. By the time I finally feel better and the dreams stop, it's Wim's turn to stay in bed. My busted toe prevents me from swimming or climbing trees. The dogs are gone, too, and I've read the one book I brought with me twice already. Stiaan offers me other books, but they're in Afrikaans and too difficult for me to read. On top of that, my mother had decided it would be too cumbersome to carry my birthday present all the way across the world, so the large fort waits for me at home. I am indescribably bored.

A few days pass excruciatingly slow, and soon it would be time to return home. Wim and I were both feeling better, but Wim still wasn't allowed to leave his bed yet, so we sat there together with the portable tape recorders that Stiaan had given us for our birthdays. It was late in the afternoon and we had been recording every album I could find in the house, overdubbing them one on top of the other (with unremarkable results). "I like your mother," Wim said as he looked at a cover of Nana Mouskouri's greatest hits. "I don't like mine, and I don't think she likes me or Papa either. Only your mother."

"I know", I said. And then I told him the story of his parents in Paris.

Side

A

- 1

Long forgotten pleasures
- 2

Sublime tribulations
- 3

Alain Delon

3:44  
4:04  
4:27

*Opgeneem in Tokio, Kaapstad, Londen*  
*Unintentional Consequences is die tweede*  
*dubbele album Odyssey, a Sentimental Journey*  
  
*Beskikbaar via Bandcamp: <https://ellende1.bandcamp.com>*

Recorded in Tokyo, Cape Town and London between May to August 2020. Unintentional Consequences is the second part of a trilogy of which the double album Odyssey, A Sentimental Journey, was part one.  
  
Available through Bandcamp: <https://ellende1.bandcamp.com>

Side

B

- 1

The splinter in my soul
- 2

TE 480
- 3

Unintentional Consequences

3:13  
3:24  
3:31

*Bydraers:*  
*Martinus Antonius: ARP Solus, Casio VL-Tone, Eurorack, verwerking, opname,*  
*Carina Bruwer: Fluit*  
*Richard Hart: Grafika en kunsregie*  
*Rafael Irisarri: Oudio-postproduksie (mastering)*  
*John John: Wurlitzer, kitaar, Juno 60, kassette, meng, verwerking,*  
*Lodewikus Pretorius: Klavier, Rhodes MKI en MKII, Prophet 5, ARP Solina, Mellotron*

Personel:  
Martinus Antonius: ARP Solus, Casio VL-Tone, Eurorack, processing, recording,  
Carina Bruwer: Flute  
Richard Hart: Design and Art Direction  
Rafael Irisarri: Mastering  
John John: Wurlitzer, guitar, Juno 60, tapes, mix, processing,  
Lodewikus Pretorius: Piano, Rhodes MKI and MKII, Prophet 5, ARP Solina, Mellotron

*[www.ellende.net](http://www.ellende.net)*

ellende.net

*Dankie Jinki, David (word gou gesond broer)*

Thank you David M (get well soon brother).



