

# Drarrie in the Night

**Fikry El Azzouzi**

**An extract**

**Original title** Drarrie in de nacht  
**Publisher** Vrijdag, 2014

**Translation** Dutch into English  
**Translator** Anna Asbury

© Fikry El Azzouzi/Anna Asbury/Vrijdag/Flanders Literature – this text cannot be copied nor made public by means of (digital) print, copy, internet or in any other way without prior consent from the rights holders.

---

1.

There are days when he puts me out like a bag of rubbish. Except people come round to collect the rubbish and they leave me on the curb. I can understand it, his fits of rage spring from an aggression disorder, he can't help that. You could compare my dad to a cat that has to catch mice or a mosquito that has to suck blood.

It's instinctive, the need to validate his dominance and show who's the man of the house.

Yes father, I know, in your house you're the man. No one doubts it. You'd marked out your territory long before I was born. But is it really necessary to chuck me out into the icy cold just because I slope in at eleven o'clock at night?

You say I'm a man? Then treat me like one. What's the big deal about eleven o'clock? Some people are at work at that time of day. Some are sitting down to a meal. Some are out clubbing. Some people are on their way to prayer.

Eleven o'clock is a good time to get home. If I'd been drunk, or high on coke, then I'd understand. Yeah, then you'd have the right to behead me. I'd hand you the knife myself.

Does he understand that his behaviour's not normal? Who sends an innocent son out into the night? Potentially fatal for a fifteen-year-old. Unless your name is Ayoub. And my name just happens to be Ayoub. Although everyone calls me Youb. Short and sweet, just like me.

Perhaps you see it differently, dear reader, but I'm convinced the dads in this retarded village get together in the mosque to confer on punishment. I can just picture it. One dad says, 'My son's grown too big and strong for the belt. I'm beginning to feel I can't punish him respectably.'

'Throw him out,' the other replies. 'Show him whose house it is. Show him you and you alone are King Mohammed VI of the house. Let him taste the rain and the cold.'

All the other dads stand there fiddling with their beards and nodding approvingly. Perhaps they chink glasses of peppermint tea and sing a little song to boot: 'Throw them out, throw them out. Forget the warm, you little louts.'

I know, I'm singing a silly song. But really, you have to see them at it to know how silly the dads are. Well anyway, I don't write songs and I'm not the person who should be educating dads. There are mirrors for that, and psychologists to explain their behaviour.

I have to walk nine hundred metres to the laundrette to see which have my friends' dads have told them to piss off too. That's the way it goes if you live in Waasdorp. Even if it's pretty much dead here, I still feel like I'm living in a zoo. With every step I take my ears ring with the cries of chimpanzees, the trumpeting of elephants and the hissing of snakes. The people are like animals driving you crazy, it's so stifling here. Still, I always take care how I walk. Round here you have to walk in style, with self-confidence, otherwise you're no more than an old man in search of his walking frame. Let me explain: you have to lean back a bit. Puff up your chest and swing your right arm. Put your left hand in your pocket, that's just for wiping your arse. That's walking the Drarrie walk.

Am I the first one to get to the laundrette? I seriously hope I'm not going to have to sit here alone all night long. Last time I went and sat on the ironing board out of pure desperation. I fell asleep and only woke up the next morning. With a stiff neck, and broken back and a whole load of mosquito bites.

Since there's a chance I'll be here alone all night long, I've brought a notebook just in case. From now on I'm going to write up all my experiences whenever I'm chucked out. You might not know it yet, but I have a very interesting life and writing's not so difficult, at least not if you're a genius like me. The few books I've read are either dull as ditch water or unreadable. I can do way better. Not that writing is anything special. Why am I doing it then? Why do people smoke, if it kills you? Why do fat people eat fatty food? Why do parents beat their children? The answer is as simple as the question: it's stronger than you are.

I'll go ahead and sit in the corner. Just behind the ironing board. I can concentrate properly there. The cops won't see me and I won't be disturbed by passers-by who like to peek through the window.

You're probably wondering why we've picked a laundrette, aren't you? There's nothing open here in Waasdorp. You can hide away here for free. As soon as the sun sets, all the curtains and all the cafés close. Apart from Black Maria. That stays open. An old lady stands behind the bar, with silver-grey hair which was once black. She takes care of frustrated elderly people, offers them a listening ear, and maybe a good deal more. Old people might look innocent, but the older you get, the filthier your thoughts. I'm speaking from experience, as a child I was completely innocent in my head.

We're not welcome in Black Maria's place. I can understand Black Maria's perspective. We're a threat to her customers. We're young, good looking and we smell gorgeous. Old people are... where shall I start? Grey hair, nasal hair, ear hair, they smell funny and their only achievement in the day is a successful bowel movement. They're on their way to demented, so they don't know anymore whether they farted or the dog barked. Old people have bad teeth or no teeth, whereas mine are pearly white. Have you ever sat and talked with a toothless old person? I only have *one* word for it: 'Tfoe.'

I could go on all night about the elderly, but I'll stop there, talking ill of the elderly is *haram* and I shouldn't waste time on it, they're as good as dead anyway.

Oh yeah, there's also a teahouse where Moroccans and other communities, apart from whites, drink tea and gossip, play dice and whatever other games they play. We Drarrie call teahouses like that not-for profits.

I'm not allowed to speak ill of my own community, but we Moroccans are the most tiresome, unreliable and perverse of the lot. But very occasionally you find an undiscovered pearl in that muckheap. A pearl named Ayoub.

We're not allowed inside the not-for-profit. Our mouths are too big, we get into fights with everyone and have no respect for our elders. What about respect? They might be ten years older, but it looks more like and they expect us to fall on our knees and kiss their hands. As far as I'm concerned the not-for-profit can get lost. It's more fun in the laundrette. You can get soft drinks, coffee and sweets from the machines. There's even a machine for bread, eggs and jam. Plus you don't get bothered by stupid men with ugly mugs and triple chins gazing lovingly at each other all day long while slurping tea.

The writing's not flowing, I can't concentrate. No need to worry, though, I'll have another go in a minute. What should I do in the meantime in this laundrette? My friends can't all be home watching TV like good boys.

'What shall I do?' I yell.

Play with my phone a bit? Way too dull. Crank out some push-ups? Way too tiring. I'm not as sporty as Fouad, he trains all day long. Oh yes, I'll send Fouad a message: Where are you? Am at the laundrette.

Fouad's parents won't let him in the house anymore. Well, it's mainly his dad who won't let him in. His mum lets it happen and feels sad. That's the way it goes with mums. When Fouad's dad leaves the house, he dashes in for a shower, pulls on a fresh pair of boxers and stuffs some food in his mouth.

Fouad's been hanging around outside for several weeks now. He wanders the streets like a tramp. He doesn't really mind. I think he actually likes it. No more nagging, no fuss, just doing what you feel like. You don't have to justify yourself if you're not back by dark. It's the ultimate freedom.

It's just a question of time before the police drive by the laundrette and I have to piss off. Then I can wander round with Fouad, or Karim, or Maurice. Alone is alone. Although I sometimes feel lonelier in their company.

'Ewa Youb, kicked out again or what?' Karim laughs, suddenly wandering into the laundrette.

'No, I like it here and I really enjoy the view of the washing machines and driers.'

'What are you doing all hidden away back there? Were you wanking? Were you about to come? Ooo, did I disturb you? Shall I leave you alone and come back later?' Karim laughs loudly.

Okay, first let's clarify things, otherwise you won't be able to follow. Karim's real name is Kevin. Karim whose real name is Kevin is as white as a glass of milk on a lazy Sunday morning. He's the only whitey in our group. Why does he hang out with us? Because he feels good around us. Don't you ever dare call him Kevin, or he'll go completely mental. Karim's a minority among us, and

without realising it, he adopts most of the customs of the majority. That's called integration. Let's call Karim a convert. He has all the characteristics of a convert. Sometimes he actually gets religious, starts praying, wears a *djellaba* in broad daylight and keeps on wagging his finger at us and telling us off. No, that's not true, he doesn't wag his finger, he sticks it right in our faces to clarify his point. Fortunately he doesn't keep it up very long, Drarries have far too much of a bad influence on him.

The problem with Karim is that he keeps on wanting to prove himself. He wants to be darker and more religious than we are. It doesn't look like it on the outside, but from inside he looks like a black man with a henna beard, a prayer cap, a *djellaba* and the latest pair of Nike Air Max trainers. He always wants to act smarter and make more trouble than us. And sometimes he goes too far. What am I saying? No, that's not true, Karim always goes too far. Like last week, when he went to the town hall to definitively change his name to Karim. The official asked him why he wanted to swap a nice name for an ugly one. Said he should be happy with the name his mother gave him. He should be proud of his background.

Karim, who has a short fuse, probably because of the integration, went berserk. Karim probably thought the official was calling his mother names. Or worse, that the official was asking for his mum's phone number. I don't know what goes on in those converts' heads.

The official must have had the thrashing of his life that day. Not that Karim wanted to murder him, but it came pretty close. Standing outside the town hall smoking a cigarette after the flogging, he was arrested by the police and spent a night in a cell. Next day he went back to the town hall to change his name. Just to show the official he wouldn't be broken. But the official was in hospital with his injuries, and a nice, pretty young lady was there instead. She told him that it's very difficult to change your name. And very expensive. If it were the other way round, changing Karim to Kevin, it'd be a piece of cake. And dirt cheap. Karim was overcome with shyness and her voice sent cold shivers down his spine. He thanked the young woman and left. In retrospect he terribly regretted not having asked for her number. Now I'm sure you have your thoughts on Karim. I have one word for him: moron.

Karim decides for himself when to leave the house. He's never kicked out. Fortunately for him he's not bothered by a dad, he only has a mum. His mum's not a hundred percent perfect, she's got an alcohol problem. Every evening she drowns herself in Duvel. Then she lies on the sofa all night gibbering. That's why Karim prefers to hang around outside in the evenings. That and wanting to show solidarity with us.

Secretly Karim fantasises about an invisible dad lecturing him. Secretly he fantasises about a dad who gives his mum a good hiding. That's what the drunken witch deserves. Don't look so surprised. They're not my words, they're Karim's. Do you know why Karim hangs out with us? Because he can kick back and be himself. Karim's not a hundred percent. I'm not a hundred percent. None of my friends are a hundred percent.

'What are you writing notes about? Don't you have time for me? Trying to show you're clever? Playing the intellectual. Wanna wear a hipster pair of glasses or something? What are you writing, is it about me? Write about me, I'm really interesting. Really someone should write a book about me. I've experienced a whole load of stuff. I'd do it myself, but I'm always too busy. Actually I can't stand words and all those letters stress me out and give me a headache,' shouts Karim.

I shrug and carry on writing. Delusions of grandeur, all my friends suffer from them.

'You know what I dreamt yesterday? I know it's strange, but I dreamt I ate my mum. In my dream my mum was still alive. She demanded I cut off her hands. Then I had to cook them in a pan with some onion and garlic. She said her hands mustn't be wasted, they had to be useful. In my dream the hands tasted really good and my mum couldn't open a can or hold a glass anymore. Perhaps that's the solution to her problem,' says Karim.

'Cutting her hands off? She can still use a straw and drink hands free.'

'Idiot, you always have to spoil it.'

'I don't understand why your mum needs to stop drinking. Be glad and enjoy your freedom.'

'Why did I bother telling my dream to a moron?' Karim sighs, looking outside and seeing a woman in a red coat walk by.

'Come on, let's follow her. I think she's drunk. You can see it from miles away,' says Karim.

'And then what? At most she'll piss her pants or get lost on her way home. I don't know what all those drunkards are up to. Anyway, according to you everyone's drunk at night, she could just be walking home.'

'Come on, we'll go ogle her a bit, have a bit of a laugh, a bit of *rwina*, then the night will be over,' says Karim.

'You want to scare her?'

'Yeah, that's a laugh, right? Maybe I'll touch her up a bit. Did you know some women fantasise about groping in a dark alley? Specially if it comes from a good looking young man. *Yallah* Youb, we'll make her dreams come true,' says Karim.

Women fantasising about being groped in dark alleys. I'd say he's a hundred percent right about that. As long as they're groped by Drarries.

I hesitate about going with him, but anything's better than sitting on a washing machine all night.

'First let me just note that Karim and I are going to give a woman with a red coat the fright of her life. Maybe we'll grab her bag, but probably not. Knowing Karim, he'd rather grab her bum, even if she'd prefer he didn't,' I say, writing busily in my notebook. I stop writing, shake my head and scrap the last sentence. Clearly I still have a lot to learn.

'Are you coming now?' shouts Karim.

I jump up and we go in search of her. In the distance we see a tall, slim woman walking along. We run towards her, stop five metres' away and saunter along behind her. Karim hisses. I join in. The woman doesn't turn round.

'What beautiful black boots she has. I bet they're really expensive. I can just smell the leather,' says Karim, sniffing loudly. 'Miss, what a beautiful red coat you have.'

There's a nervousness to the woman's pace now. We're like wolves, we can smell fear.

‘What shiny brown hair that woman has. I’m sure it’s not dyed. Her hair smells so good. Miss, could I smell your hair please,’ asks Karim.

We’re both sniggering away until I say, ‘What long legs she has. Slim and muscular, as they should be. I think her red coat and black skirt go very well. I’m curious how the front of her looks. Hopefully it’s as good as the back.’

‘I’m shaking just thinking about it,’ says Karim in a shaky voice.

The woman grips her little leather handbag tighter.

‘What a beautiful little bag she has. Very stylish, I’m curious what’s inside,’ says Karim.

‘It’s a classy bag. Give the woman a clap for her class,’ I shout.

‘What, she’s got the clap? That’s filthy talk, I don’t think she thinks much of you or your filthy talk. Leave her alone now Youb. No means no. But when I look at her bum. So beautiful, so big, so round and so alone,’ sings Karim laughing at his own joke.

Suddenly we rush at the woman, overtake her and turn around. We look at her and she looks back at us, knees knocking and frightened eyes. With a broad smile Karim says, ‘Pretty.’

‘Very pretty, especially her red coat,’ I say.

‘Madam, what big eyes you have.’

‘Madam, what a big mouth you have.’

‘Madam, what big tits you have.’

‘Madam, what a big bum you have.’

‘Madam, what a big...’

Karim doesn’t know what to say, so we stop and let the woman, who really isn’t that pretty at all, walk on by.

You know what the look in her eye said? I’ll tell you. She’d have liked to run into that dark boy on his own but wouldn’t touch that toffee-nosed Belgian with a barge pole.

We go back to the laundrette.

‘Did you have fun, then?’

‘To be honest, no. Frightening women bores me. We’re too old for it. I think we need to come up with something else to occupy ourselves,’ Karim replies.

‘Why didn’t you grab her handbag? We had a chance then.’

‘What did I just tell you? Are we twelve years old? Plus, I’m a good person,’ says Karim.

In the laundrette Karim tells me about the Red Devils. He says Marc Wilmots should be sacked at last. Marc Wilmots doesn't have the head to coach Belgium. Too white and too worn out.

'Who's Marc Wilmots?' I lie.

'The Red Devils' coach. Don't you know anything? You're really not interested in anything. Write that down: I'm a writer who's not interested in anything.'

'Yes I am, I'm very interested in myself.'

'Haven't you ever wondered why all the management are white? In the Red Devils almost all the players are black, but the coach is white. Ever thought about that? No, you have a me-myself-and-I mentality. I'll explain it to you. Don't forget to write this in your little diary, Mr Look-how-clever-I-am-cos-I've-got-a-pen-in-my-hand. Like seeks out like. It's true of animals and it's true of people. That's the way the world works. Whites'll never put immigrants in top jobs. No, they're only allowed to play on the field like monkeys. Do you really think those footballers are that good? Okay, maybe they are good, but the main thing they need to be is stupid. Racists, we live in a world full of racists. Remember that when you watch a match. I refuse to support the Red Devils. When they get a black coach or a Muslim manager, I'll become a fan again,' says Karim.

'*Tarnon*, you're really talking rubbish, and your story's not even true. What are you doing with us? Like seeks out like? Shouldn't you be hanging out with white Flemish kids? Think of your future. Ever thought of hanging out with your own kind? That's the only way you're going to get top jobs and drive a big fat BMW. CEO Karim Van De Walle,' I say.

'Fuck top jobs, fuck my surname. Firstly, I've been through more dark times than you, so I'm way darker than you. Can you imagine what it's like growing up without a father? No, you're too stupid and egotistical for that. Secondly, I won't sell my soul, not to anyone. You'd give your own backside for a *dürüm*. And I'm pretty sure a *dürüm* would fit perfectly up your backside too. Thirdly, I may be a layabout, but you're a way bigger layabout, you just don't realise it.'

'You know what your problem is? You're jealous because you didn't have a dad to mistreat you when you were little,' I said.

Karim changes colour slightly and starts to stutter. He looks at me penetratingly for a few seconds and says, 'You know what I've just noticed? Why do they call themselves the Red Devils? Are they trying to promote Satan? Do they want us to support the devil? I should have known, the devil's everywhere and football's a sport that was invented for the devil.'

Suddenly we hear a motorbike horn. It's Fouad approaching on a light green Vespa scooter. He's wearing Ray-Ban sunglasses and a white helmet with the Italian flag on the side.

'*Wajoow Hulk*, how did you get that scooter, and an old-timer too? Do you realise how expensive those things are? Can I test it out?' asks Karim.

'Shades, Italian helmet and leather jacket. *Zehma Chataar*. *Zehma* style. Shame about that coat – looks like you bought it to grow into. Is that an XXXXL? Shame about the worn out Nikes and your sweaty feet. Not to mention your skid marks,' I laugh.



'Jealous,' shouts Fouad with a put-on squeaky voice. 'Women only look at the outside and what's in your trousers. And by that I mean money,' says Fouad rubbing his fingers together.

I rub his gloves and say, 'You're wearing leather gloves too? Did you mug someone? Or have you got a job? Are you doing the washing up somewhere? Find me a job, I want to earn money too.'

'Let me have a ride,' says Karim repeatedly.

Fouad tries to get out of it, but as always Karim won't be put off. They carry on bickering until at some point Fouad sighs and says, 'To the end of the street. No further.'

'Why are you wearing sunglasses? It's dark,' I ask.

'Style, it's all about style,' says Fouad, suddenly changing his mind and refusing to hand over the Vespa. Fouad knows Karim'll never stop at the end of the street.

Karim pulls on the handlebars of the Vespa, still demanding a ride. The two almost get into a punch-up. All for a Vespa. At least they've progressed. They used to fight over waffles and a sip of cola.

After a while of Karim repeatedly swearing on God, his mother and the holy books, he's allowed a ride. As if Karim cared about any of that right now.

'Idiot. He won't be back until tomorrow.'

'What was I supposed to do? The guy just kept on wearing me down. He'd practically have given his arse to be allowed a go,' says Fouad.

'Where did you get that Vespa from?' I ask.

'Long story, I'll explain later,' says Fouad.

*Zehma* hiding stuff. Typical Fouad. Always keeping secrets, always acting mysterious. But when foot comes to shove his secrets don't mean a thing.

It's cold and overcast, so we go and sit inside the laundrette. I rub my hands, scratch my head and start industriously making notes. Fouad gives me a funny look, but then he takes off his jacket, jumper and all his other clothes. He launches into a long round of push-ups.

'Why are you taking all your clothes off? People'll think we're *zemmers*.'

'I have to make use of this quiet moment. I like to be able to see my muscles when I'm training. It makes me more motivated. Shame there are no mirrors here. But I can see my muscles in the glass too. Look at my arm muscles. Look at my chest. Rock hard, they are, and look how ripped I am. Look at my washboard abs. Look Youb. Moron, look.'

I glance at him very briefly.



'You know the difference between me and most bodybuilders? I've got the legs too. Most of 'em have those thin spaghetti strings. Take a look at my calves. Look Youb, look at my calves. Why aren't you looking? Have you ever seen such enormous calves?' shouts Fouad.

'I'm not that interested in calves, unless they belong to a woman.'

'Today was a good day for me. I slept well, ate well. It started with a big breakfast. Ten eggs, but only the whites. Then a bowl of porridge with skimmed milk, a banana and a bowl of low fat yoghurt. I took some supplements and vitamins too. An hour later I ate dry rice and boiled chicken. Have you ever eaten boiled chicken? Practically inedible, but it's good for my body. Lots of people don't realise it, but for muscles it's all about nutrition. It's a good start to the day when I've eaten well. What are you writing? When did you turn into Shakespeare? Am I saying Shakespeare right or is it pronounced different? What, you thought I'd never heard of any writers? You think I'm some kind of idiot? Hey Youb, can you earn money with writing? Write a story about my life, that'd be a bestseller. But I want a percentage. Who am I kidding, you a writer? Don't make me laugh, you're mediocre at everything. Wouldn't you rather learn knitting? At least that's useful, then from time to time you'd have a warm scarf,' Fouad wheezed.

'How can I write about someone doing push-ups in boxer shorts? What's interesting about that? Unless you're trying to make it as a stripper.'

'Now you mention it, would a career as a stripper suit me? All those women chasing me for my body. All those women wanting something more after my show. What about you Youb? When are you going to start training? You've got a posture like an old sack of potatoes or a lazy dad ambling down to the mosque. Never forget, your appearance tells people who you are. And what are you telling people? Nothing. When did you last pump iron?'

'A couple of months ago. When my bike had a flat tyre.'

Fouad sighs and looks at me disapprovingly.

'Don't give me that scornful look and sigh like that. One thing's for sure, in the end your body's going to let you down.'

'I'm going to look trained until I die, but you... how are you ever going to defend yourself with those spindly arms?' asks Fouad.

'Simple, I'll just use a knife.'

'Moron, you've got an answer for everything. Did you know I'm planning to do another treatment?'

'Well good luck, and you can find another victim to stick a needle in your arse.'

Okay, dear reader, I'm going to explain to you what I did with Fouad. A very long time ago... No, that's not true, six months ago, every day for three weeks I injected a needle of anabolic steroids into his hairy bum. The packaging stated in English that it was for cattle. I showed it to Fouad. But that just made him more excited; he said bulls have enormous muscles. At first I didn't want to do it. Not because they were anabolics for animals. Fouad's an ass in any case. But do you see me as his nursemaid?

I ignored him, refused to pick up the phone or answer his texts. For days he kept on whining and accusing me of not being a good friend. Summer was coming and he wanted to look his best. I was sabotaging him and begrudged him his success. Just training would take him way too long and it didn't have any effect anymore.

In the end I gave in. After the injection I left him to disinfect it himself with alcohol. That task was a step too far for me. I didn't want him thinking I was giving him the injections out of love. He needed to feel that I was doing it against my will.

Fouad changed visibly. You saw him properly turn into a gorilla. With zits, it should be noted. The way his skin smelt. Not to mention his bad breath. The way he looked around, head on one side, with a glassy stare. In conversation he still stood too close, as if he might devour you at any moment. Fouad didn't talk anymore, he screamed. I don't know what I injected into him, but it turned him into a different Fouad. Let's just say he became a bad version of the Hulk.

I'm not responsible for Fouad's transformation, he'd better not come complaining to me later if he gets cancer or has a heart attack or whatever other dreadful diseases you get from it.

After he turned into a gorilla with my help, I didn't get so much as a word of thanks. That's the way it goes with friendship. Fouad said I'd done something wrong, because hard patches appeared on his bum and kept getting bigger. At a certain point he couldn't sit down anymore without screaming. At first he wore a nappy to reduce the pain when sitting. Eventually he couldn't take it anymore and went to the doctor. The doctor sent him to hospital. They had to cut into his buttocks to get rid of all the pus. And now Fouad has a deformed backside. All for the sake of looking good for the summer. Okay, perhaps I should have disinfected his bum. Okay, I shouldn't have injected him like I was dealing with a mad bull. Okay, I am sorry for him when he looks sadly over his shoulder and strokes his tattered buttocks. But it's his own fault. Who asks such a thing of a friend?

I shake my head and say, 'Clearly you haven't learnt your lesson. I thought you'd never inject yourself with poison again.'

'Yeah, I thought so too. But summer's on its way and that's the most important time of year. I want to show off my muscles again this summer. You realise how much success I had last year? Plus, the chance of me getting cancer from it's really low. It's just rumours. I heard one in ten people get sick. And the younger you start, the smaller the chance. Don't forget there are benefits from anabolics too. Just look at my muscles then look at yourself. If I had a body like yours, I'd throw myself in front of a train. I'll tell you something, but keep it to yourself. When I took anabolics and other rubbish, I couldn't get it up anymore. At first I was scared. I thought I wouldn't be able to have children. No nights of pleasure. That I'd literally be a softy all my life, while the rest of my muscles were rock hard. Luckily it was just temporary. But really that period was a blessing for me, before that I felt like a complete maniac. You know me, I'm not a hundred percent. You know how I was with women. I always had a horrendous itch in my you-know-what and sometimes I'd stare like a randy dog and unconsciously grab my you-know-what when a woman walked by. I couldn't do anything about it. It was as if the devil was operating my body parts. You know how humiliating that is,' Fouad says.

Yeah, especially for the women who had to watch a gorilla like you grab his you-know-what and then run off.

Remember this, dear reader. Fouad's behaviour isn't befitting of a Drarrie. A Drarrie knows how to treat women.

We hear the horn of the Vespa. Fouad's still doing push-ups. Karim's standing smirking at the window.

'Youb, how much is that hairy ape asking for a go? Is it full moon tonight, I see Fouad's turned into a werewolf?' Karim laughs.

Fouad's right hand continues to pump away in strict time while his left hand gives the finger.

'Go for another ride. I'm about to start on my stomach muscles,' Fouad calls out.

Typical, a moment ago he was ready for a fight. Now he's lost interest in the Vespa.

'Youb, what are you doing staring at that failed stripper?' says Karim.

Now I give him the finger. Suddenly I see lights and hear sirens.

'Police, police,' shouts Karim.

Like a shot Fouad grabs his clothes and we take to our heels. The three of us dash off in different directions. At first the police car doesn't know who to choose, but soon it drives after the Vespa. I keep on running until I end up in the park. I'm dizzy and have a headache. I think I'm going to throw up. Fouad's right, I urgently need to get in shape. I sit down on a bench and start to write. Shame there's so little light here. I write that I've run my lungs out of my body. Honestly, dear reader, that thing about the lungs and body is a grave matter.

An elderly, corpulent man with a grey raincoat sits down at the other end of the bench.

'Hello,' he says. 'It's a beautiful night and I notice it's inspired you. If you want, I can help you. I can provide further inspiration.'

I give him a dirty look.

'You look pretty young. Are you still in school?' asks the man.

'Fifty euros, payment up front,' I reply.

Without a word and with trembling hand he passes me a fifty euro note.

I take the note and stand up. I take to my heels and at a distance of ten metres I shout, 'Piss off, I'm not a fag. Rub up against those trees over there.'

I've picked one of those spots again. In parks you only find devils, demons and *zemmers*. I walk away, walking my self-assured Drarrie walk. Hopefully that fag isn't lusting after me now. Actually, let him enjoy it. He's paid fifty euros for it.

I'll go and see if my mum left the door ajar. Perhaps I can get back in. Wandering round outside all night really isn't my thing.