

# Bart Meuleman

**Original titles and publishers**  
Hulp (Querido)

**Translation** Dutch into English  
**Translator** Willem Groenewegen

© Bart Meuleman/Willem Groenewegen/Querido/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.

---

lie quiet when I stick a finger in your mouth.

otherwise your body will get tainted.

this is a time of difficult tests, you know, only after my raging letter

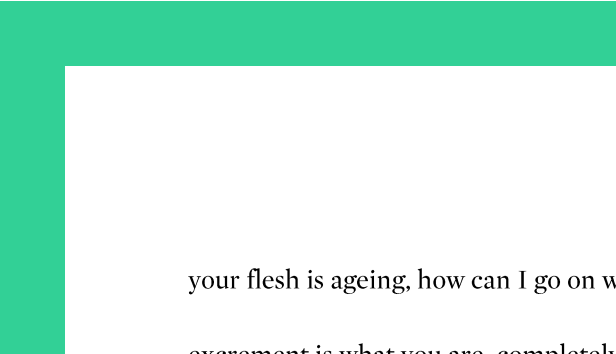
chemistry wanted to leave its principles behind.

we're not going in for procreation. you can ask me anything else.

what I have in mind should now be given a chance.

what do you think? in my heart I can't be bad.

see, you already seem to be laughing a little.



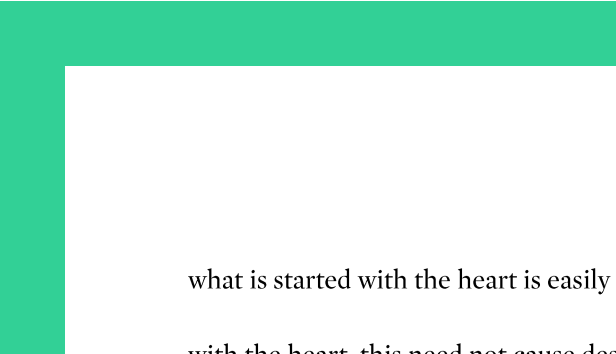
your flesh is ageing, how can I go on with you?

excrement is what you are, completely. it's quite costly.

but look, look at your hands, you're not bleeding anymore, while you were  
once a pond.

you should let me be, I have a headache – that endless lighting never mind  
what godforsaken hour of the day.

you're really leaving. if I say now surroundings will vanish, quite gently,  
then your likeness. press once more on the fleshy switch.



what is started with the heart is easily released

with the heart, this need not cause despair.

in general, one has the freedom of most of one's organs,

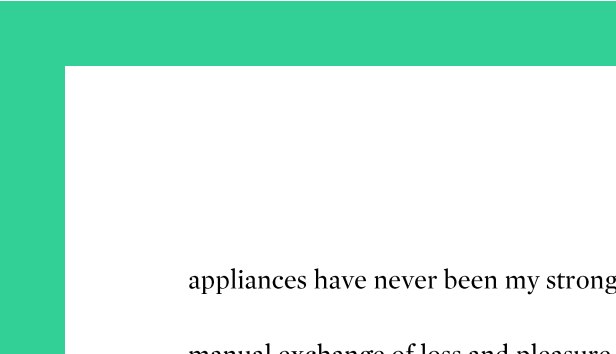
except a hand when she's asleep and the exhausted rod.

but true sorrow lies elsewhere. give it a wide berth.

go astray in surrounding fields till morning is near, before

you're sought between the pylons, months later,

and you think you've worked it out.



appliances have never been my strong point, I've always believed in  
manual exchange of loss and pleasure, hate and sorrow, thought and death.  
your life really brings a breath of fresh air.  
the proper distortion of the facts, every day you breathe, the murmur  
from your body.  
it's also the way you are, button on my finger, when you fall asleep, electric.  
the tiredness, my dear, we must keep sharing it.

that I suddenly dropped by, I hasten to add,

straight through the frame of your opened door

into your vacant chamber, my dog on its chain up close to your pilot flame.

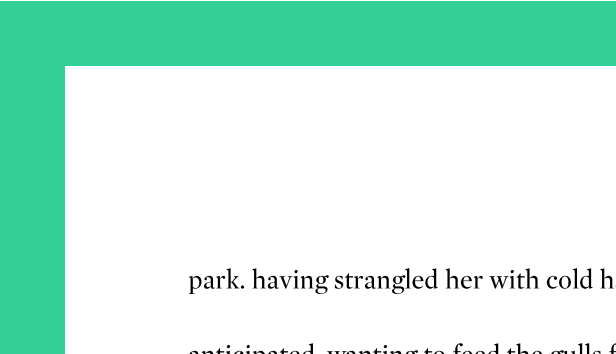
I 'didn't know what I was saying' and 'screeched with fingers' nails into the walls',

that's the kind of artist I thought I was at the time, perhaps even worse.

thank god I'm no longer anything, my hands in bandages.

cocktail hour? here I am! ping pong? I'll just watch! churchyard? a cadillac!

etcetera and so on.



park. having strangled her with cold hands, because it couldn't be

anticipated. wanting to feed the gulls from off a bench.

how to save me? a question that almost brings tears.

as a child I lived in the woods as long as I could, in disgust of the smallest things.

people loudly, dutifully, called me in and at a trot I went,

became even more of a criminal in later life.

complaints fail to reach me

because I constantly need to squirt on the centrepiece,

on the centrepiece, need to squirt,

squirt, on the centrepiece,

on the centrepiece, squirt.

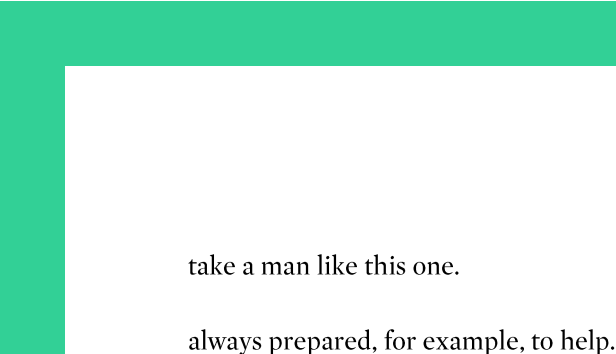
I heard someone ask what it was I did, between times.

squirt I said, on the centrepiece.

and when that's done?

I said: squirt on the centrepiece.

questions?



take a man like this one.

always prepared, for example, to help.

well regulated by his

urges.

get him ready for a life with us,

share in his happiness.

replenish him with your temporary water, make him growl

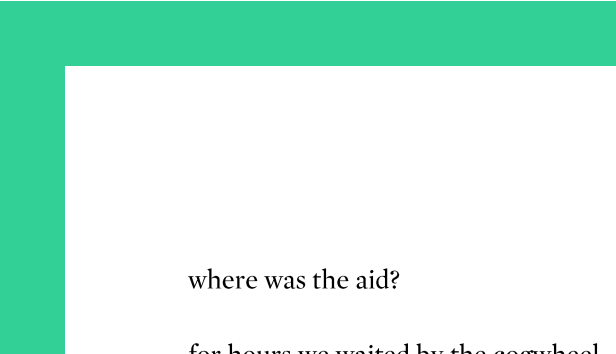
softly, too.

when the moon bangs: a starting shot.

when the core smothers: the finishing line.

in between, nothing but darkening love.





where was the aid?

for hours we waited by the cogwheel.

wires snapped loose one by one, the belly

wasn't going to make it.

what there was – a little empathy – dripped inside

like a liqueur.

no, dearest, we didn't get there.

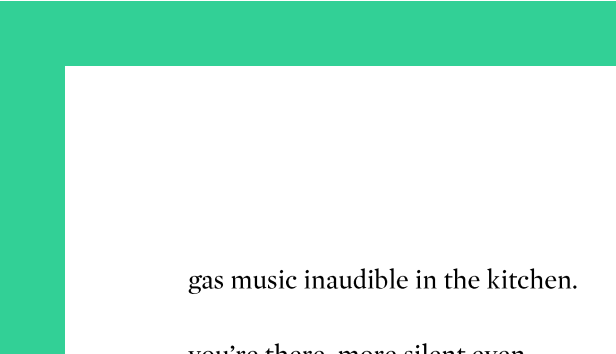
also, the time, the money,

everything scraped together and laid in your broken arms.

that's how it had to be.

that's how it ended.

let this, once and for all, be a lesson to you.



gas music inaudible in the kitchen.

you're there, more silent even

than the little bell-jar.

as for me, I'm facing a difficult homecoming.

I'd rather be standing beside a pond, eyes fixed on

a mirror so dark,

so happily pongy

that I will now start to laugh, loud and uncontrollable.

everything is so immediately different.

also the void, that so easily lures me to your railing.