

# Delphine Lecompte

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**Translation** Dutch into English

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## 1 person is enough to remain human

I want to ask him: ask me to marry you  
His head lies in my throbbing region  
He can forgive me anything  
Ripped books, snipped ties  
An ivory alligator in the window of a pawnbroker's.

There's blood sticking to the alligator  
But my loved one is pure  
Rehabilitated and richer by a medal  
He shakes his locks when  
I boast about my antics  
To handsome young men  
Who plot my downfall.

His hair is grey  
And his intelligence congealed  
After the Congo, the death of his chameleon  
I want to say to him: you're a wise old man  
But he'd know I was placating him.

He doesn't want to be a wise old ex-colonial  
Unmarried he strokes my soles  
I look at his shrivelling parts  
And try to excuse my vandalism.

# I get up to make yesterday into the day before yesterday

I get up to think about yesterday  
Yesterday I wrote a bad poem  
But I thought it was great  
Yesterday I washed an aphasic woman  
And stole a culinary magazine  
From the waiting room at my mother's gynaecologist's.

The aphasic woman was called Martha  
She used to be a truffle grater in a factory  
I haven't looked at the culinary magazine yet  
My mother's still got a uterus  
But she doesn't use it.

After thinking about yesterday  
I contemplate the day before yesterday  
The day before yesterday I didn't wash anybody  
Especially myself  
I didn't steal any magazines  
My father wrote to me on a postcard of a grazing zebra  
That he was proud of his nursing daughter who had given birth  
To a son without a harelip  
The trunk of the plane tree was wet  
With an Irish tourist's urine.

The Irish tourist wanted to murder me yesterday  
I don't want to think about that too long  
After all, it's today that matters  
Now  
Now I've re-read my poem  
Again it's not great

# At night our hobbies sound less optional

The car's gone  
I remember how he groaned  
When we got home  
Like the indifferent mother of a stillborn foal  
Yet we went inside and  
Got on with our miserable life.

We always had chickpeas in the store cupboard  
The shotgun was used weekly and  
The dog knew when it should disappear under the table  
The car's been sold to a miserly dentist  
When his daughter was ten  
She bullied me for eleven months.

My grandfather is dead  
At night I wait for his vengeful apparition  
During the day I think about his hobbies  
Where the car used to be there are antlers now  
They get dusted monthly  
By a cleaning lady who comes from France  
She says she has two children  
A gifted son and a marginal daughter.

Not all mares are indifferent  
When their offspring drop out dead  
In the stable, the steppes or the circus sawdust  
My grandmother can't ride  
Or shoot  
But she still wields a shotgun.

# He's given me my cards

He thinks I'm bluffing  
when I say I've got pyromania and fourteen short stories in me  
he shudders involuntarily and changes the subject  
I don't like his subjects (infidelity and heraldry)  
but I'm addicted to the breeziness he bears in the mornings.

This afternoon we had a few difficult hours  
two stuffed hares are playing cards  
the hare with the best cards looks defeated  
now he snatches the cards out of their paws and  
throws the hares out of the window  
the one with the poor hand lands on a tourist  
he curses my beloved in Scottish and sneezes  
I say: the curse doesn't count because he sneezed  
the hare with the aces hits a skinny, furtive-looking woman  
he says: she looks like you, maybe we should call her inside  
but we don't know what she's called.

It's up to the stars tonight  
I join them up slowly and they represent a dog  
biting the paint off a table leg and later dying of lead poisoning  
you join them up quickly and keep the meaning to yourself.