



CHANTAL VAN DEN BRINK

## Letters from my Soul | 3

About the bottom of the pit  
And the encounter with my twin soul,  
Who finally brings me home.





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2005-2011



Uitgeverij Bierman van den Brink

Een op de drie vrouwen  
is als kind seksueel misbruikt.

Diane Russell, Onderzoek Seksuele Uitbuiting

Verdriet, woede en pijn zijn noodzakelijk gezelschap  
op de weg naar heilheid.

Laura Davis in haar voorwoord bij *The Obsidian Mirror* van Louise M. Wisechild

Niemand kan een trauma alleen aan.

Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma en Herstel*



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For my parents,

Who gave me life

And

For Meta,

Who taught me how to live.

I.

## Raw

Breathe Chantal, in heaven's name, breathe. Just a few more minutes, you're almost there. My shaking hands tighten their grip on the steering wheel tight as I mutter quietly to myself. On both sides of the highway fields, cows and horses are shining in the bright sunlight, but today I have no eye for the world's beauty. Gritting my teeth, I keep my eyes fixed on the road, I must focus! But then I see the blue sign Driebergen-Zeist flashing past and I realise I have missed the exit. I check the time on the dashboard. Blast, I'm going to be late! Fighting a rising inner panic I count the kilometres to the next highway exit, speed across by-roads with too many traffic lights and finally park in front of Anne Sofie's school, stressed to the bone.

This is how it's been ever since my mother's funeral one month ago; I have to pull out all the stops to get even the most trivial things done. Taking care of the children, the laundry, the shopping; tasks which before were matter of fact, suddenly require more of me than I have to give. My mental capacity seems to have switched off, my coordination wiped out and my mind caught in a fog. An invisible hand seems to have punched an aching hole in my torso near my heart. I don't recognise myself anymore.

At home I lift five-year old Anne Sofie out of her car seat; her light blonde hair, swept into a jaunty ponytail, tickles my arm. In her little hand she clasps that day's art work, a cardboard

sheet filled with colourful splashes of paint. But as she chatters on about her teachers and classmates, I hardly hear her. Then Wim comes round the corner, smartly dressed, on his way to a business meeting and our eldest daughter rushes up to him, 'Daddy!' The art work swirls onto the gravel.

He puts his leather briefcase down and swings her onto his arm. 'Hello darling, how was your day?' His free arm he wraps around my waist.

Involuntarily I shrink back for a minute, my hands instinctively pushing him away. *That black hair, that slim posture, the impeccable clothing ...* My heart is beating in my throat and I break out in a cold sweat. Upset, I shake my head to brush away the memory of my father. *Stay here*, I say to myself, *this is your husband*. Awkwardly I smile at Wim, 'Sorry, I'm not completely with it.'

He kisses me on my temple. 'Are you still so wobbly? Have a lie down and I'll be back in time to help cook.'

Grateful, I squeeze his hand. Then I turn away and disappear with Anne Sofie in the direction of the kitchen door.

'Did you pick up that printed matter?' Wim shouts over his shoulder, while he puts his things on the back seat of his car.

Blast, no, forgot! 'I'll go get it in a minute.'

But a moment later that promise too has gone right out of my head.

Inside the house, Juliette our almost two-year-old daughter, is being fed by our new sitter while Frederique, our toddler, is playing with her dolls. The sweet Surinam housekeeper, who'd been taking care of our house and children three days a week for some years past, has terminal cancer. Apart from the sorrow of the inevitable farewell, it has landed us with an acute practical problem. Luckily, I found this young woman via an ad in the local

paper; she doesn't want to clean but fortunately she wants to babysit. Together we discuss how the morning went and then I search in my bag for my purse. What? It's empty? But didn't I withdraw money yesterday? I clearly remember standing at the ATM machine. Or did I imagine it? Has my memory become so confused? 'I'm sorry,' I say, embarrassed, 'I thought I had money on me. I'll pay you tomorrow.'

'Okay, no problem.' With a wave to the children she walks out the front door and a moment later bikes energetically off the estate. Through the window I watch her leave, my feelings mixed. Pity she couldn't stay a bit longer, I would have liked a short nap.

In order to keep the children busy, I take the wooden children's table plus the chairs out to the terrace and put out pots with coloured pencils and colouring books. The little ladies in their bikinis can get cracking. Then I stretch out on a large colourful cloth on the grass, so I can rest while still keeping an eye on them. Juliette enthusiastically totters after our red tom cat and frantically tries to catch his tail. 'Watch out, little girl, he doesn't like that and he'll lash out at you,' I warn her. But she just laughs and carries on.

Suddenly, a cup of lemonade falls over. The sticky stuff gushes over the drawing things and drips through the slats in the table top onto the flags. 'Damn!' I scream much louder than necessary and haul myself up again. 'Pay attention to what you're doing! What a mess! Look, now everything is dirty!' I grab Anne Sofie's little arm and shake her roughly. Immediately inner alarm bells start ringing. 'Chantal, control yourself, this doesn't make sense!' But I can't control my emotions and grumbling loudly I mop up the sticky liquid, as the girls stand by, looking bewildered.



Later that afternoon, when Jules has been put to bed and the older ones are watching a video, I sink down on the terrace outside, next to the kitchen door and rest my head on my knees. My trembling fingers slide nervously through my hair and over my skull. Why do I find this so hard? Why is something as simple as taking care of my children such a struggle? My body seems to be filled with barbed wire, every movement hurts. Warm tears drip onto my bare legs.

Then I feel a small hand on my shoulder. 'Mummy, what's the matter, why are you crying?' I lift my head and look into Anne Sofie's alarmed blue eyes. 'Do you miss granny?' Carefully she wipes my eyes with her small finger.

'Yes, sweetheart, I miss granny.' It's the simplest explanation. 'I'm sorry I yelled at you.'

'Are you not angry anymore?'

'No, I'm not angry anymore. I know you didn't do it on purpose.' I stroke her head.

'Mummy, the new sitter smokes.'

'What? Really?' The lady in question never told us.

'And we are never allowed to play outside, I don't like her.' My little girl's tone expresses genuine indignation.

I drag myself up and take Anne Sofie by the hand. 'Come, let's make some tea.'

As promised Wim is indeed home by dinnertime but his face spells trouble.

'What's wrong?' I ask startled.

'We've been screwed.' He chucks his keys onto the sink. 'His lordship is going into business for himself with immediate effect and takes "his" clients with him.' He is referring to the oldest partner in our business, or rather our former partner; we bought his

shares back only last year.

I feel the blood drain from my face. 'Then we'll definitely end up in the red.' I immediately conclude.

'That's not the worst, he refuses to comply with the contract.' Coaches who start their own business and wish to take clients with them, need to pay an amount contractually agreed upon. 'The clients concerned have already been informed.'

My thoughts go back to the conversations we had with this partner last year. The story then was that he did not want to be an entrepreneur anymore but did want to stay connected as a coach. 'How stupid we've been! He must have planned this from the start. I told you we should have engaged a lawyer.'

My husband runs his hand through his hair. 'His exact words were, 'I shall only pay if a judge forces me to do so.'

Defeated I lean against the sink, a half-peeled potato forgotten in my hand. 'And now?'

Wim stares at the floor, his eyes wide open with fear. 'I don't know, I'm going to make some phone calls, get some advice.'

A few days later we're meeting with our Advisory Council in the estate's large room and the picture becomes clear quite quickly. If we had known last year when buying back the shares that this partner wanted to start his own business, we could have enforced compliance with the contract. Then the acquisition price would have been set off against the purchase price of clients. Now we don't have a leg to stand on, unless we take legal action.

'All that negative energy,' I grumble frustrated, 'I don't want to prosecute.' I lean back in my chair, a lump in my throat and stare at the traffic at the intersection.

'You don't necessarily have to, you can also let it go,' one member of the advisory board remarks. He puts his hand comfortably



on mine. 'The emotional pain does not heal through such a legal action and materially the outcome is uncertain, no matter how good the contract is. Such a legal action costs a great deal of money. On balance you won't necessarily be any better off.' His sensible, clear eyes look at me in a friendly manner.

Filled with despair I look back, torn between his loving look and my inner panic. Not taking legal action, letting fifty grand go, just like that! Heavens, what a gesture! Am I be able to do that? Do I want to do that? Will we ever get over it?

'Next month we will transfer *De Viersprong* to the new owner and the highest fixed costs will cease,' Wim observes. 'Wouldn't it be better to focus on the future, to concentrate on moving house and the review the options on how to proceed from there?'

We close the meeting without taking a decision. The sense of injustice and betrayal we feel is too great to be dealt with so easily.

During our short walk back to the chalet, Wim and I express our amazement at the fact that anyone, let alone our long-term partner could be capable of pulling the wool over our eyes in such a ruthless way; someone with whom we appeared to have a good relationship, with whom we had worked closely for so many years. 'I don't get it,' I sigh. How gullible we sometimes are, we see ...' my breath stops short in the middle of the sentence. A bit further down, in front of the chalet someone is lying in the grass, flat on her belly. Good heavens, the sitter! What's happened? And where are the girls? While my brain calculates how long we've been gone and what could have happened in that time, I make a dash for the girl, go down on my knees and shake her arm. 'Hey, wake up!' but there is no reaction, the young woman seems to be unconscious. Again, I shake her arm which, despite this beautiful weather, feels cold. Wim in the meantime

runs to the chalet, returning immediately with the reassuring message that the children are watching a video.

'Huh? What?' Dazed the sitter leans on her elbows, her dark hair hanging tousled around her face, white as chalk. 'Oh, it's you. What time is it?'

'Almost four, what happened?'

She shakes her head. 'I don't know...' stiffly she gets up and leaning on my arm stumbles inside, where I give her a glass of water and wait for her to get back to her senses. Then I detect a strange smell and I remember Anne Sofie's remark that the sitter smokes. She wouldn't ..., would she?

But yes, a few days later I hear from a fellow-villager that this young woman is an addict who has stolen money from several addresses; the police apparently have a file on her. Great! We'll have to start looking for another sitter and until then I need to stay home.

In a way that proves to be a good thing, as it forces me to slow down. I try desperately to function in a normal fashion, to get out of bed, take care of the girls, drive Anne Sofie to school and to pick her up again, look for a new housekeeper and arrange to move Soulstation to the coach house so the new owner can take vacant possession of the main house. But despite my sincere efforts it all proves too much for me. Ever since my mother's death my normally very efficient self is operating in a fog. The slightest tasks cause me to panic, the smallest setbacks bring me to tears. My body throbs with a nagging, continuous pain. At night, I lie in bed frozen; fists clenched, ankles crossed, my legs tight against each other and regularly upset by nightmares. Later I will learn that I suffer from dissociation<sup>I</sup>, a phenomenon of inner separation that occurs after a trauma causing my daily

personality to be haunted by the buried emotions of the traumatized girl in me. But at this moment I continue to attribute my lack of balance to my mother's death. I believe I'm just in mourning and it doesn't occur to me for one moment, that the suppressed memories of the abuse are causing my problems.

Hoping to regain a little of my stability, I call Maeike Piebenga, a colleague of my beloved regression therapist, Tineke who is away. Normally I would postpone my appointment until Tineke's return, but now I just can't wait. Before the summer Maeike and I exchanged a few sessions; I gave her healings, she gave me regressions. That work built enough trust between us to enable me to turn to her in my present vulnerable state. I must, so I believe, tackle the emotional problems relating to the death of my mother.

'Connect to your body, make contact with the frozen feeling that bothers you during the night and discover what has caused it to become part of your system,' Maeike starts the session.

Willingly I follow her instruction but first all I can hear from this three bedroom Amsterdam apartment, is the sound of the big city outside, people rushing along the street and pursuing the business of the day. Then slowly, I sink into the images that have been gnawing at the edge of my consciousness.

*I lie in bed sleeping when a movement wakes me. My father has come to lie next to me under the blankets. His tall body creeps close to mine, his breath damp against my skin. I'm 3, maybe 4 years old. Oh, help, no! For a moment I have the urge to throw the blankets off me and stop the session. At the same time I realise that my unconscious shows me these images for a reason. Okay, right then, breathe. The door opens and my mother comes into my room. Her face freezes in bewilderment, dismayed her eyes go*

*from my father to me. The silence of the night is palpable. Then, without saying a word, she turns around and softly the door closes behind her.*

*Mummy! Noooo! Don't leave! Desperately I stare at the closed door. It feels like I've lost my mother forever.*

*At that moment I can see a large part of my soul splits off and ends up in a child's orphanage in the energetic world. There it's safe, that soul's part is well taken care of.*

'Do you still have contact with your body on earth?' Maeike asks. Because of her training with Rob Bontenbal and Tineke Noordegraaf, founders of reincarnation therapy, she's not surprised by my description of this energetic split.

'No,' I sob. 'I don't want to know what is happening there.' She lets me repeat that a couple of times, which makes me reach new images.

*The days pass, sometimes I'm alone, sometimes with my father. My mother isn't there. One time I lie with my hands tied behind my back on the bed, my father's member pressing against my face. Then there's the sound of the kitchen door opening, next to my room. That must be mummy, so close! But my father's hand has a vice-like grip around my throat and the other forcefully covers my mouth. His dark eyes blaze with fury, 'Don't you dare!'*

*'He's changed, it was never like this. He now enjoys hurting me!'* Horrified I hear my own words. My hands tied behind my back and his member against my face? He enjoys hurting me! Impossible! This can't be true? Please let it not be true! Will she believe this? Shouldn't we stop?

But Maeike remains sitting next to me, unmoved. 'Feel what that's like for you, that he enjoys hurting you,' she encourages me with a soft voice. That question really opens the floodgates and I disappear into a swamp of pain. Waves of sadness and

of shock crash through me, I use tissue after tissue. When the storm has passed, the next question comes. 'What do you give up, Chantal, the moment you realise that he enjoys hurting you?'

'*The hope that I will ever get out of this ...*' and frantically I rub my wrists. They feel bruised, as if there actually was a tight rope around them.

Completely beaten I drive home after the session. Are these memories really about me? Is this the sweet, kind man everyone talks about? It just doesn't fit. Let it not be true! It just can't be true! Did my mother really know?

For days after the regression I'm in shock and I can hardly function. Anything I decide to do I forget five minutes later. What people tell me goes in one ear and out the other and often I suddenly don't know where I am. I do my best but that's not enough, I'm just not there, I can't stop crying and my whole body hurts, my wrists, ankles, hands, feet, back. At night I lie under the duvet, arms and legs stiff, tormented by the constantly recurring question; did this really happen? Please don't let it be true, it just can't be true!

On the morning of the long awaited day of the transfer of *De Viersprong*, I go on a quick errand to the village with Juliette. My step is light, reassured by the knowledge that this heavy load will finally fall from our shoulders. But then I trip over one of those concrete bollards and before I know it I'm flat out on the pavement, complete with child, shopping and all. Fortunately my arms prevent Jules' fall and physically there's nothing wrong with her but she does roar with fear.

'Hush sweetheart! Hush!' With the help of an elderly couple

I scramble to my feet, while I calm my child. Trembling like a leaf I rest my bum on the concrete bollard while I try to get over the shock. Then I thank the couple, find my way back to the car with Juliette held tightly in my arms and return home. These kinds of accidents don't happen for no reason, I know that only too well. What could this mean?

I don't have to wait long for the answer. At home Wim walks towards me, holding a fax in his hand. He is crying.

Quietly I take the piece of paper from his hands, recognise the landowner's logo and scan the text. 'To our regret we have to inform you that the permission for the transfer cannot be at the location in time...' But forbearance is no acquittance, surely? My eyes search those of my loved one, against my better judgment, hoping for reassurance.

'I just spoke with the civil-law notary, the buyer is furious. He invokes the last resolatory condition and has had his down payment retransferred.'

Shocked to the core I stagger away from Wim. The scurrying grey clouds, the rustling trees at the edge of the lawn, whizzing cars on the by-road, odd how my awareness of everything around me is suddenly sharpened at this moment. I let myself sink into a garden chair moaning like a wounded animal. 'No! Damn, no, no, no!' I roll over like a foetus and rock myself back and forth.

The sale is off and we're back to square one. After three and a half years of costs, viewings, bridging loans, we're left empty handed again. How in God's name are we going to get through this? If it had not been for my inheritance, we would now be bankrupt. After several heated telephone calls, it becomes clear the buyer has definitively pulled out. He has no intention of doing further business with this haughty aristocratic family from

whom we lease the land and who, according to him, behave like they still live in the seventeenth century, treating him with such disdain. I can't completely disagree with him as I'm also fed up with their behaviour. Later I do however discover that the situation has not been entirely inconvenient for our buyer; the deal hadn't gone down well with his board members and the rate of his listed company had lately plummeted. Still, this mess does lead to one unexpected, positive outcome. During a long meeting in which our estate agent threatens to go public about the course of events, the landowner finally agrees to a change in 'intended use'; the estate is allowed the option of use as an office.

In all this commotion I again make an appointment with Maeike for a regression. I still haven't found my ground and know only one way, to push right through it. Automatically I choose a therapy form that has given me so much help in the past years, regression. Later, when I realise that I'm contending with signs of trauma, I will discover that there are more suitable forms of processing. Trauma, as I will learn then, is primarily a biological affliction, involving damage to the nervous system which only heals through body oriented therapies. But at his moment I believe that I can solve my imbalance with a couple of regressions; an illusion, alas.

Probably, my guides are trying to tell me the same thing, because on the way to the appointment it seems like something is trying to prevent me from arriving at Maeike's apartment. I get lost, drive in the wrong direction and am time and again hindered by road blocks. Actually, I should have turned around, but pigheadedly, I persevere. The theme I bring in this time, intimate, but it must be faced, is the coldness and numbness in my vagina. Quite frankly, I expect to delve into a past life, but to my horror again images of my father come up.

*Daddy, don't! Get off me! I feel how he enters me. It hurts, something tears and I start to cry. My parents wrap me in a blanket and take me to the hospital. Doctors look with a small light in my crotch and after that I have an emergency operation. I hear the doctors talk during the operation 'she's still so young, she'll be lucky if she can have children.'*

*When I come round, there is silence, nobody talks about what happened. My father leaves me alone for a while and I relax into being alone. After some time he starts coming back to me during the night, but he never tries to enter me again.*

Did this really happen? Is this really about my life, about me? If only my mother were alive, I could ask her.

Over the course of time I will understand that not all my 'memories' of this life have actually happened. Actual situations may have become mixed up with those from past or parallel lives, with the experiences of other members of my family line and even with those of other incest victims. Likes attract likes. But at this moment I still think in terms of 'I', 'my consciousness' and therefore 'my life'. That leaves me two possibilities; either the memories are correct and then everything I was told about my childhood is a lie, or the images are a fabrication of my mind in which case I would be on the verge insanity. But how is it possible then that I feel everything with my body? I really don't know what to make of it.

Despite this confusion the regression sets something right and I'm able to function in the outside world a bit better. Not at anything like my old level of competence, but I can handle common-or-garden situations again.

Now that the main house is empty and we don't need the space

in a business sense, we make a virtue of necessity and move our family to the 1700 cubic sized building at the beginning of December. We lease the chalet and Soulstation remains in the coach house. The girls love it. Elated they dance around the meters high Christmas tree in the large living room, where there's a large fire every day; tirelessly they fly up and down the wooden spiral stair case and tell whoever wants to hear that they now each have their own room. I also enjoy the space, often standing in front of the French windows of our bedroom on the first floor, enchanted by the park's beauty. But this new found peace and space cannot exorcise my inner demons.

One evening my young daughters, aged four and five, are playing in the bath, their bodies shiny with water and soap. Roaring with laughter they hit on the water with their hands, large flakes of bath foam flying about. Holding a towel in my hand, ready to dry off a child, I take in the scene, hollow-eyed. Suddenly an all-consuming rage arises inside of me like a four-headed monster; rage about the soaking wet bathroom floor which I will have to dry later, about the children not listening to me and just doing whatever they like.

The voice of a guide warns me in my head. *'This is not about them, they aren't doing anything wrong.'*

Frustrated I throw the towel on the floor and stamp away quickly, my fists clenched, before I give in to the rising impulse to give someone a big smack.

So this is how big the falsehood of my personality is, so thin the layer of civilisation. Filled with disgust at my rage I sink to the floor of my bedroom, with my back against the bed. Tears drip onto my hands lying powerless in my lap. 'Dear God, get me out of here. Get me out of this swamp. Teach me to laugh again.'

Caught in this inner turmoil I just sit there until Wim puts the children to bed.

What an insane year we've had. First Juliette's eczema, then my mother's illness, a period in which I needed to navigate between her denials and my clear perceptions. After that the images of abuse, the funeral and the shock. Then our wonderful housekeeper turned out to be terminally ill, the new sitter who proved to be an addict, our partner who betrayed us, the sale of *De Viersprong* which was cancelled at the last moment and those childhood memories I have a hard time to imagine possible ... My pen flies across the pages of the diary on my knees, while my mind is reviewing my life. Sighing I rearrange the pillow behind my back and pull the duvet tighter around me; in this old building it's just as cold at night as in the chalet, but I write on. Soulstation is a mere shadow of what it once used to be. Although Wim does his utmost to keep the business going, without me and our partner it is a lost cause, our turnover has plummeted and we incur heavy losses. Only my inheritance is keeping us afloat financially; weird, one man's breath is another man's death. Nevertheless, I'm scared of the long term. If *De Viersprong* doesn't get sold, even my inheritance won't save us.

When the flow of words ceases, I descend the spiral staircase to the living room where Wim is watching a football match. 'Ha,' he mumbles distracted, 'are the girls asleep?'

'Absolutely sound asleep.' I drop down on the arm of his chair. 'Shall we have a chat?'

He gestures towards the television. 'I want to watch the end of this.'

Enraged I turn around and disappear back upstairs again. God, how I hate seeing him sitting slumped in front of that

stupid television night after night, looking so vulnerable with that tormented look in his eyes. It triggers all kinds of emotions in me which I know Wim doesn't deserve, but I can't help. 'You empty me out! You don't take care of me! You're not here for me!' Fortunately, I realise at other moments that I'm in transference, my actual anger is that of a child towards her father. Wim does what he can. If I were in his shoes, I wouldn't be able to keep the business going all by myself either.

At the first opportunity after the turn of the year, I am therefore on the mat at Tineke's again. Fortunately, she's back from her travels abroad.

*'I hate you...'*

'Repeat it a few times until the accompanying situation becomes clear.'

*'I hate you, I want you to leave.'*

'Is that something you hear or what you say yourself?'

*'It's something I think. I can't say anything because I have a shawl over my mouth.'* I have a shawl over my mouth? Internally I groan but nevertheless, I allow the picture to emerge, trusting that my subconscious doesn't bring it up for no reason.

'Can you feel what you are trying to do, when that shawl is over your mouth?'

*'I try to protest, to move, but it doesn't work. I'm stuck. My hands are behind my back.'*

'What happens when you notice that you're stuck and can't do anything?'

*'Then he gets his way again. He does things I don't want.'*

'What are the consequences for you, if he gets his way again?'

*'I feel used.'*

As is often the case, Tineke lets me repeat the sentence a few

times and the words bring me deeper into a situation I really don't want to see. After that she asks, 'How do you know when it's over?'

*'When I wake up, he's gone. I have a dry mouth, my wrists hurt, I stink.'*

'What is most important for you now you know it's over?'

*'Wash my hands, pee, drink some water.'*

'And then?'

*'Go back to sleep.'*

'What do you expect will happen now?'

*'I'm left in peace, until the next time.'*

'Tell me what you never said before about the next time?'

*'He ties me down with ropes. He once put a bag over my head.'*

*And he hits me. He's angry.'*

'What does he say then?'

*'He says nothing.'*

'And if he says nothing, what does he emanate?'

*'That it's my fault, that I have to make up for something and that I have to give him what he cannot give himself.'*

'What are you starting to believe?'

*'That I'm not mine,'* the words come out of my mouth falteringly, my whole body is crying, *'that I will always be unsafe.'*

'What makes him so angry?'

*'He feels powerless, his business isn't going well, he can't handle it. He takes it out on me. It's like he tries to squeeze everything out of me.'*

'What would he like to have of you the most, you think?'

*'I don't know. I don't have anything anymore. Everything is gone ...'*

'Tell me what's all gone?'

*'My connection with God; a part of me has left, gone back home.'*

'Where is that home?'



*'There, up ... Here the pretence is there's nothing the matter, it's not talked about. But I'm in pain.'*

'Do you tell anyone that you're in pain?'

*No, that's not allowed. I pretend it isn't there.'*

'How can you keep that up?'

*Just ...'*

'Yes, by breaking your connection with God, disconnecting from your body and going back home, until the next time. That isn't nice, is it?'

*It's horrible ... and then he dies.'*

'Is that also because of you?'

*'I don't know. I was wearing his life jacket, so maybe a little. I am glad that he is dead, I have peace now.'*

'So, you only have peace when he's dead. Or does he still come after he dies?'

*'Yes, but then he's different. He wants to make up.'*

'How does he think he can make up?'

*'He says he's sorry.'*

'Does that help you?'

*'No, I'm too scared of him.'*

'What would you say to him if you weren't so scared?'

*'I hate you! You hurt me so much and so often! It wasn't once, it wasn't a mistake.' My voice diminishes to inaudible whispering.*

'You can say it out loud,' Tineke encourages me.

*'I want you to keep off me!' I stammer hoarsely. 'I belong to myself. You empty me out until there's nothing left. I can't build on you, you build on me! But I'm small! You made me scared of life, you made sure that I couldn't trust anything or anybody. I'm all on my own.'*

'Keep talking, talk right through your fear.'

*'It hurts so much! I don't want it, please I don't want it! Mummy, help! It makes no difference what I do. Whether I'm very sweet or*

*bad, whether I'm asleep or awake. I have nothing to say and I'm not protected!'*

'Whatever he says to you, you are not to blame, you must let that get through to you.'

That activates the adult in me. 'I understand what you say, but this is how I felt as a child.'

'Tell him what more is needed apart from, "I'm sorry". He can at least explain why he did those kinds of things.'

*'He says he was sick, sick in his head. He says that he heard voices, that he had moods. When the mood was over, he was quite normal.'*

'Did these voices incite him to this kind of behaviour?'

*'Yes.'*

'Did he ever tell his wife that he heard voices and that he did this to you?'

*'He says he told her that he wasn't happy.'*

'Try to explain to him that for the moment there is nothing to forgive. That this will only come up when he's gone through his own mourning process for it. 'Later I realise that Tineke is giving me the space to be angry. In order to heal it is necessary to acknowledge what happened in the past, and what it has done to me. 'Tell him about the damage he's done to you.'

Noisily I blow my nose in the tissue she hands me. 'I don't know where I end, I don't know where I stop and the other begins. That's why I'm like a fuel tank everyone can click on to.'

'So, you were happy when he died, because it finished then?'

'Yes,' I agree, still with my eyes closed, 'otherwise one day he would have killed me.'