

Written on spiders

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The computer didn't connect to the internet. I was lying on the sofa half asleep, and through half shut eyes I watched the guy they had sent up as he checked the line. I had immediately fallen in love with him. Now watched him sitting, turned away from me at the desk. His hair was something between a Cherokee haircut and just his hair. He had changed the desktop environment of my computer to Chinese. Through the tinted glasses of the windows I could see hundred meters of Beijing, then dissolving into a mist of grey and brown. The hotel room was the most beautiful one I had ever been in, a suite, not just a room, with a large living room and four white couches. Lying on one of them, I was pretending to be asleep as to not make him nervous. It was raining outside. Actually I had been sent there because it was not raining enough. This whole year was about the drought, spreading from Sydney to Nairobi, from London to Beijing. Wherever I came to, it was raining, though.

The rain was black. On the darkened windows the rain made black drops, running down in black lines. It looked graphic, more painted rain than rain, more Japanese than Chinese. The rain in London had been casual, people did not bother to avoid it, sitting outside, mainly because of the new smoking ban. We had smoked a fast cigarette before entering the National Gallery. Wonderful free-of-charge museum, you can enter as if it was your own memory, whenever you need it. Part of this memory are two paintings by Titian, one he painted when he was twentyfour, the other when he was eighty. He was then not allowed to paint anymore by his own workshop, who feared he would destroy his and their reputation. Being nearly blind, he had started to paint with his fingers. You can see his hands on the painting. The two paintings are hanging next to each other, both beautiful, and very different, showing that there is no improvement in becoming older, things you lose, things you gain, yes.

My eyes wandered back from the rain to the Chinese signs my computer produced, to the guy still working on the internet connection. In silence. I fell asleep.

I dream a lot. Lately I also tend to have nightmares and to shift conversations with people I should talk to, intomy dreams, confusing, whether I really spoke to them. The last one was set in a Maoist restaurant in Rome I had once been to. They had advertised their pizzas and pastas in Chinese, headed by a portrait of the big chairman. There was another person in the restaurant. A man pulling a trolley with a briefcase and an architect's roll on top. On top of these was a cardboard sign, written on it, neatly, in black felt pen I could read:

KEEP DISTANCE
slight motion disorder
no mental disease
no contagious disease

I had to meet an official from the embassy to introduce me to the security measures at the WHO headquarters in Rome. I was wearing sunglasses to slip through his face recognition patterns, in case I would, after the explanation, no longer intend to go there. I knew that the security concept of WHO was based on oblivion, on short term memory and overwriting information. It worked in recording both the movement and the pattern, the dancer as well as the dance. WHO, he explained to me, was an organisation based on