

# **IN MEMORIAM**

**by**

**Hanneke Paauwe**

**English final version  
for Company of Angel's Theatre Cafe 2007**

English translation June 2007

© Rina Vergano

## IN MEMORIAM

A site-specific show to be performed in various places in a real graveyard. ( If possible )

Lighting: by oil lamp only

Roles: Father, mother, son and daughter.

(Location: by the gates. The sound of church bells)

### MOTHER

Those bells, eh. They drive some people mad.

But not me. I live nearby, my husband works here and you just get used to them. Most people think: Oh, another funeral. I think of my children's christening.

The bells are ringing.

People stream into the church, smartly dressed.

A bit like you.

And the choir is singing.

Arno in my left arm.

And Nora in my right. Twins.

They're wearing white gowns covered in lace with a long train.

My little darlings.

When the water's sprinkled over their heads, they both start screaming for dear life. Their little faces go red, bright red!

From my breasts: two fountains of milk. I feed the twins.

My husband of course has to take a photo.

In that photo it looks just like those two baby heads are my breasts.

Two bright red breasts with yards of lace hanging from them.

I look a bit strange in that photo.

I'm smiling but I also look a bit embarrassed. A bit like: *(she imitates the photo)*

The children call that the Mother Mary photo.

And yes, I do look a bit like Mary with those trains under my bust.

When my children see that photo, they make fun of me.  
My children like a laugh.  
So do I.  
I always say: if you didn't laugh it'd be a sad old world.  
My children mainly make fun of me when I'm worried.  
I don't have to say anything. They sense it.  
Take this summer for instance.  
We're on the beach, my husband and Arno are burying Nora in the sand.  
They give her a fat tummy, two boobs as big as footballs, the picnic basket is plundered and  
two apples become nipples.  
Then it's Arno's turn. He gets a fat belly too.  
Twigs, washed-up seaweed, some bits of rubbish, that becomes chesthair, and of course, the  
cucumber becomes his willy.  
My husband, Arno and Nora burst out laughing.  
I take the picnic basket away from them and suddenly see two buried children.  
A pair of seagulls start screeching.  
I get goosebumps.  
They shout: 'Hey mum, wave to Adam and Eve!'  
I run over to the twins, start kicking the sand away, it flies all over the place.  
'What's the matter?'  
The three of them grab hold of me, drag me through the sand.  
Chuck me in the sea like a beached whale.  
I don't let them get away with it, throw handfuls of mud at my children.  
A mud fight breaks out.  
We don't say a word, dig up handfuls of gunge, chuck it back and forth till we're all grey.  
The Mud Family.  
Like some weird health sect taking curative mudbaths in the North Sea.  
People stare. We aren't bothered.  
We're happy. Sun, sea, mud, the four of us.  
That evening I go and look in on the children, even though they've told me that they're too  
old for that.  
Their faces are sunburned.

Bright red cheeks.

I rub some cream on them.

Arno gives me a kiss and asks me if he didn't hurt me when he dragged me through the sand.

Nora's snoring away in her bedroom.

I turn the bedside light off, and then she asks me in a sleepy voice who is the brownest, Arno or her.

I say she's the brownest Nora in the whole world.

She gives me a hug and says I'm the nicest mother in the whole world.

*(The mother sees a toy car, picks it up, takes out a remote control from her dress, and makes the car move forwards towards the lawns)*

Arno! How many times do I have to tell you, this isn't our garden!

I'm not going to keep picking up after you!

*(Walks on, towards the lawns. In the part of the graveyard where the children's graves are we see Nora, she is lighting tea-lights, they are placed in the shape of the word: ARNO. The mother takes us with her to the lawns)*

(Location: Lane/lawns. We hear someone playing violin)

**ARNO** (*Appears across the lawns, in a pair of pyjamas which are too small, and missing a square of material*)

I'm an angel.

An angel in my father's wallet.

A bad dream in my sister's sleep.

I'm the guilty feeling that gnaws through the body of my family like a tapeworm.

A fantasy in my mother's mind.

I was wearing these when I died. I had a fit, vomited, choked.

She keeps this square in her handbag.

Have you ever seen an angel wearing pyjamas before?

I'd rather have been a hero:

Batman, Superman, Spiderman, but yeah, you can't climb up tower blocks and save screaming girls when you've got epilepsy.

And a samurai warrior who foams at the mouth is just ridiculous.

'Samurai ni isihino kagewa, itsumo tsuite marawu.' (*bows:*)

You think I'm strange, don't you. I'm used to that.

People have always thought I was strange.

They didn't say so but they did think it.

If you can fall down any minute, lay there foaming at the mouth for a while and go like this (.....), then you're weird, strange, yeah, that's different to a bit of breakdancing, or whizzing by on skates.

That sort of weirdo, that sort of nutcase loony lame brained crackpot nutter, well you don't want him on your basketball team, otherwise you're bound to lose.

Girls don't want to go out with a dribbling Frankenstein.

You'd better keep an eye on him.

That's what my parents did too. I was their problem child.

The sicker you are, the sweeter they think you are.

The more pathetic you are, the more they love you.

And the more important you become.

Problem children get all the attention.

And what's the most pathetic thing in the world?

Being dead. When you're dead, then everyone's on your case.

I didn't want to be pathetic. I wanted to be ordinary.

No, I wanted to be sexy.

Especially as the prince. *(takes dictaphone out of his pyjamas. Plays music. Does little dance from the musical. Bows)*

My sister and I had parts in The Sleeping Beauty, the musical that our teacher had written.

Nora is a fairy. I'm playing the prince.

I really want to be the prince because then I get to kiss Eveline.

All the boys want to kiss Eveline, and Eveline doesn't want to kiss anyone.

But now she's got to.

I'm madly in love with Eveline, but I don't dare to say anything. I'm hoping that I'll get off with her automatically after the musical.

Nora says that I'm a complete imbecile.

I say that Nora is a thick fairy.

Our mother is proud that her twins have got important roles.

She makes me a velvet costume, and a fairy cloak for Nora.

Evening after evening she sits there sewing.

I'm a bag of nerves.

The whole family's being driven mad by me.

Every evening we sing the Sleeping Beauty song, and rehearse.

Then comes the most important rehearsal: the prince wakes Sleeping Beauty with a kiss. I brush my teeth, stand under the shower for hours, practice with my pillow in front of the bathroom mirror.

Then off to school completely hyped up.

Eveline is lying on a school bench with a flowery tablecloth over it.

Very still. She's very good at that, lying still with her eyes tight shut.

She is so beautiful. I bend over her.

Eveline gets the giggles. She can't stop.

have an epileptic fit.

I fall over, lie on the ground convulsing and my crown convulses with me.  
They must have told me that a hundred times afterwards.  
Children start laughing. Frightened eyes. Secret laughter. Fingers that point.  
The teacher gets into a panic.  
People bending over me.  
Fingers in my mouth.  
Mobile phones are being pulled out. Whispering.  
'There's something wrong with his brains.  
The inside of his head has exploded.  
Look at him lying there. Crapping and dribbling, is he? Pity about his costume.'  
Eveline starts bawling.  
My sister puts her arm round me.  
The children are sent out of the classroom.  
After a quarter of an hour, it's all over.  
I'm sitting dazed on a chair and can't remember anything.  
Eveline's snivelling, suddenly starts shouting that she doesn't want to play Sleeping Beauty any more.  
'I'm scared. I don't want to be kissed by a....by him.'  
I am gutted. I think of Batman, Superman, Spiderman, of my favourite samurai Myamoto Musashi.  
Nora shouts back that it's no big deal, that I only have the occasional fit, but Eveline's had enough.  
She think's I'm strange, weird, dirty.  
She doesn't want to be touched by a strange weird little guy.  
'Hey you stupid borderline cretin,' shouts Nora.  
'Just say once more that my brother is strange weird and dirty.'  
Evelien says nothing. Nora is furious.  
'Kiss him or I'll knock your nose straight through your stupid face.'  
Eveline says nothing, shakes her head, no.  
Nora wacks her in the face. Evelien has a nosebleed.  
Nora's not allowed to be in the play any more.  
I don't want to be in the play any more.

Nora is a Disqualified Fairy. I am Prince Epilepsy.

I wanted to vanish, become invisible.

I shut myself in my bedroom and travelled with my trains, model aeroplanes and remote control racing cars, again and again to Japan. Tokyo, Kyoto, Hokkeido.

I became a hero. A samurai. Indomitable. Honourable. Courageous.

I follow the 'bushido': the way of the warrior.

Always stay calm, especially in a fight.

Have your body completely under control.

I read Manga comics for hours on end and I hear the great Sengoku daimyo Uesugi Kenshin:

'Samurai ni isihino kagewa, itsumo tsuite marawu.'

'He who hangs on to life, will die.

He who challenges death, will live.'

In my bedroom everything grew calm in my head.

I wasn't frightened any more about having a fit.

About the kids at school.

I've got a magic katana.

Look... here. I'll come back.

I'll keep coming back.

*(Performs a sword-fight with light-sabre, disappears over the lawn again)*

**MOTHER:**

He's good at that, isn't he.

I know, all mothers think their children are special.

But Arno is special.

When he was four he could already open mussels with his little fat hands.

He once played with water for an entire afternoon.

He watered all the plants endlessly, the whole lawn was soaking wet.

I told him he couldn't have any more water.

A little bit later I look outside, and I see him peeing in his little watering can, and then it was the daisies' turn to be watered.



He's a lovely boy.

Nora and he each got a guinea-pig for their birthday.

After a week Nora's completely lost interest.

But Arno keeps looking after those smelly jumpy little creatures.

I can't tell them apart.

The guinea-pigs.

But Arno can.

'The one with the white spot between his ears, that's Myamoto, and the other is Musashi.'

He's mad about those creatures.

He builds towers and castles out of cardboard boxes for them, then you see one of their little snouts poking out through a wonkily cut out window.

Arno tells them whole adventure stories, full of disasters and wars and stuff, and then those creatures have to flee over the drawbridge – a couple of milk cartons taped together – he pushes them onto the top and then they clamber down again, it's very funny.

After the castle came the air balloon.

The twins had been given one of those balloons filled with helium in the shopping mall. Some promotion or other.

Arno asked for four more, and got them.

Yeah, he can be charming, when he has to be.

In his room he builds an air balloon.

Arno wanted to be skipper of a hot air balloon, a karate champion or a pilot, but of course he knew that was never going to happen.

Arno hangs the balloons on my bread basket.

Nora keeps hold of the basket and bets that it won't work.

I don't say anything.

Arno fetches the guineapigs.

One of them gets into the basket meekly, the other one squeals its head off.

Those little paws on the edge, those quivering snouts, I'll never forget that.

'Da-daaaaaa' shouts Nora.

Bang, the basket falls to the floor and the two guineapigs dart away under Arno's bed. Nora and I laugh.

Arno gets angry. He's got a terrible temper.

We're driven out of his room, the door's locked.

I'm know for sure that he's plotting another experiment.

Sometimes I worry.

Arno's not allowed to sit in front of the computer for too long because of his epilepsy. But you can't get kids away from that screen.

So you have to keep an eye on things.

I'm not a control freak, but sometimes you've got no choice.

I open the door.

Arno and Nora are sitting at the computer.

They don't hear me.

But what I hear is.... *(gives a couple of horrible screams)*

I go closer, see a cartoon character going into an empty room.

The twins call out names of children in their class. 'Nico, no, it's...'

Small icons appear: a sword. A rope. A gun. A chainsaw.

They click on them and the cartoon character is shot, sawn in half, strangled, stabbed, with the most fantastic visual and sound effects.

My children laugh.

'What's going on here,' I call out.

'It's just Painchamber, mum. A game.'

'I don't want you playing that kind of game.'

I turn the computer off.

The twins stick their middle finger up.

Not till I've gone, mind, I know them.

Later on that evening Arno tells me that he won that game.

'I'd rather you carried on building castles. For Myamoto and Musashi.'

I hope Arno's going to be an architect.

*(leaves)* Or an inventor. Or a heart surgeon. Tree surgeon. Bicycle repairman. Lawyer. Game warden. Something to do with building bridges... engineer.

(Location: further along the lane)

**FATHER**

What's the nicest thing you've ever smelled? Come on. Think.

I'd say: a child. Your own child's head.

We should all lay down . Just lay down quietly. Put your ear to the ground, and listen.

In this ground there are lots of buried stories.

The earth will tell them to you.

If you're in the right state to listen, then you'll hear the voice of silence.

The many voices of sorrow.

You don't dare to lay down?

You don't dare to lay so close to the dead.

Too soon, you think, or too creepy... one day we'll all be lying here.

Can you smell it, the earth, the trees, the grass?

Listen... Can you hear the rustling, the murmuring.

Feel the darkness, the night air on your skin, the expanse of the world under the ground, the world beneath your feet.

I've buried all sorts here.

Traffic fatalities. Suicides. Boat refugees. Victims of violence, criminality, old people.

Newborn babies in shoe boxes, dead people in coffins, or wrapped in sheets.

A thousand times I've said: 'deepest condolences'.

Every day I see kilos of sand and litres of tears.

And hysteria, disbelief, shame.

Agression. Silence.

I thought I knew what grief was.

I didn't know anything, till I buried my own child.

I thought the best thing to do with grief was keep it to yourself.

I kept it to myself so as not to cause my wife pain.

My wife kept it to herself so as not to cause me pain.

What you don't speak about doesn't exist.

What you don't think about doesn't exist.

I've got nothing to say to anyone.

That's what I thought.

All words are a tasteless piece of chewing gum, chewed to bits by many mouths before me.

I'm saying nothing.

In each silence I hear my son.

Arno sits there like a black border round my thoughts.

Actually everything I see carries the contours of death in it already.

When you're hungry, you eat.

When you're cold, you put warm clothes on.

If it's windy, you put up a windbreak.

If you go on a journey you take out travel insurance.

If you get sick you go to a doctor.

If you're grief-stricken, you're on your own. Just get on with it.

There's no insurance against grief, no windbreak for the heart, no umbrella for tears. No-one mentions it. No-one knows what to say.

Grief makes people quiet.

Out of twelve friends, there are three left over.

People don't want grief, pain, people don't want to talk about it.

They say nothing, don't dare to ask anything.

They can't talk about it, don't want to be around someone who's not having it easy. Not having it easy for too long.

After a while you don't even dare to broach the subject.

Grief doesn't make a person popular.

We laid Arno out in his own room.

I thought of all the Arnos I've ever imagined, teenager, adolescent, adult man, all the lives I'd thought out for him.

Musician, lawyer, inventor.

Young father with a couple of kids round his neck, mucking about in the garden.

A concerned Arno who leads me by the arm as an old man for a walk along the sea.

There he lies, a pale Arno whom I'd never imagined.

All his friends come round.

They leave flowers, letters in the coffin, poems, drawings.

They light a candle, cry, hold each others hands, talk to him.

They tell me that they can't believe it.

The last day that he's laid out, the hearse is already in front of the door, they're almost putting the lid on the coffin, a girl slips in quietly.

I don't know who she is.

The kid just stands there, crying her eyes out.

She wipes her cheeks, and then she strokes Arno's white face.

She bends over and kisses him on the mouth.

I stand in the doorway and say nothing.

The girl walks past me into the hallway.

'Who are you,' I ask her.

'Sleeping Beauty,' she says.

The alarm clock ticks on.

The papers and comics keep on coming.

Children race to school on their little cross bikes.

Laws are made, broken, babies are begotten, born.

The wars and disasters carry on.

The geraniums in the windowbox keep growing.

My fingernails too.

It's amazing how the world goes on without a backward glance.

I walk down a shopping street, bump into people with their hands full of carrier bags. They snap at their whingeing children and have no idea at all that they're squandering their precious time. They laugh, chat.

I wish I had a heavy-duty gun.

Then I'd bark at everyone: 'FREEZE, don't move a muscle the lot of you.

Hands up.

Do you realise that you're all alive.'

But I've got no gun in my pocket.

Just a hankie full of snot and tears.

Now and then I think, it's just like I'm living in a coffin.

I can't see outside.

Everything is black.

My wife is lying in another coffin.

We talk to each other through the cracks where chinks of light show through.

I can't touch my wife.

She's got rusty railings in her head that squeak and groan: this far, and no further. The gate stays shut, and rusts fast.

My son has gone and I'm losing my wife.

I miss my wife. Her warm hands.

She's got to embrace me.

And if she doesn't, then I want someone else to embrace me.

When I walk along the street I sometimes have the urge to walk up to an unknown woman and ask: 'Would you mind putting your arms round me.

Just press me against you. Please.'

I've had a shower.

Clean underwear on, aftershave on.

I get into the car, drive to a different city, through a street with red lights in the windows.

I select a woman.

Go inside. Pay. She undresses. I undress.

Two naked people take hold of each other.

Lay on top of each other. Sweat. Jolt. Relax.

I get back into the car and I know: this isn't what I want.

I want my own wife. A living Mia.

I want her to cry and not act like there's nothing the matter.

She's got to cry, and then I'll hold her tight.

Mia kisses me. We both feel how much we've missed each other.

Our bodies glow. We roll over the floor and...

For a very long time I couldn't sleep.

I listened to the creaking of the stairs, the wind, the rain. I waited.  
Arno was going to come back.  
It was all a prank, a silly joke.  
All we had to do was shout: 'Arno, we love you,' very loudly, and then he'd appear.  
It was a game of Hide & Seek that had got out of control.  
That's what I was hoping. That's what I told myself.  
Till I finally understood that the game was over.  
I was inconsolable.  
No-one could comfort me.  
Only Arno, Arno had to comfort me.  
I looked for comfort by Arno's grave. By the trees.  
By the stone martens who make their nests in the gravestones.  
By the squirrels who clamber down curiously.  
One night I'm sitting on his gravestone and I see in the silvery light of the moon the weeping willow straight opposite me.  
In a flash I understand why that tree's called a weeping willow.  
It hangs right over, its branches trailing on the ground.  
Deeper and deeper.  
It's longing for the dead, it wants to take the dead in its arms, lift them up, press them to its trunk and breathe its green breath into them.  
I see that weeping willow and I think, that's me.  
I've been walking round bent double, actually I'm dragging my nose through the sand in order to pick up a trace of my son somewhere.  
In order not to see the world around me.  
I sit on the gravestone, till the first light bores its way through the green.  
A butterfly zig-zags past me, lands on my bare arm.  
Flaps its wings.  
I keep very still, like the branch of a tree.  
The butterfly floats in a circle, lands on my hand a moment.  
There's a fleeting caress, a wafer-thin contact.  
Then it flies away.  
Towards the sun.

That butterfly, the weeping willow, pulled all the tears out of me.  
I sat there sobbing till I thought I was just a lump of salt. I felt light, liters lighter.  
I went home. Woke my wife with a kiss.  
She was dreaming, I could feel it.  
She was dreaming about Arno.  
I stoked her gently as if my fingers were butterfly's wings.  
I pressed my wet cheeks against her and said: 'Mia, our Arno is gone, but I don't want to lose you.'  
She comes into my arms, I embrace her and think of the branches of the weeping willow. I whisper in her ear:  
'Grief, you've got to give it wings. It's got to fly, float. Land sometimes.  
Grief needs air.  
Tears have to evaporate.  
Sometimes you've got to let it rain, otherwise it's always cloudy in your head.'

**NORA** (*comes walking up in a cloak covered in little dolls, dragging a big branch*)

I'm a fairy, a bad fairy.  
Fairy number thirteen.  
In The Sleeping Beauty.  
I'm going to tell you a story and if I do this with my magic wand (*waves the branch in the air*) then you've all got to clap very hard:

Mmmhm, jolly party here.  
Ladies, gentlemen, fairy colleagues, did you enjoy the feast?  
I'd like a bite to eat too.  
Ah! No golden plate for me?



I'm not welcome? Hmmmm. (*opens little curtain, looks in cradle*)

Oh! Is that the baby?

Is this the Ugly Duckling, am I in the wrong fairytale?

What a revolting brat.

Who are the parents. You? Ah okay...

This pink monster will die.

No, not on a spinning wheel. We don't have any spinning wheels.

Our clothes are made by children in China and India who die on spinning wheels and looms.

No, this child here will die.

At night. Very quietly.

In it's own vomit.

(*waves her wand*)

For a very long time I dreamed that I could bring Arno back to life with my magic wand. For a long time I tried to magic my parent's grief away with my magic wand.

A smile round their mouths.

A bit of pleasure.

My magic wand is worn out.

You can all get lost!

Shut up, stay away from me.

Look ahead.

What are you all staring at me for.

I don't need any so-called heartwarming attention, sympathy, handkerchiefs.

Pats on the shoulder, postponement of homework, sweets, Cola, sucking up, dutiful phone calls.

Just leave me in peace otherwise I'll knock your nose straight through your face.

That's what I thought when Arno died.

Why did my brother have to die?

Twins always stay together, after all!

Why not one of the idiots from his class?

Or one of you lot?

Why do I have to be in pain?

I don't want pain, grief. I want everything to be like it used to be.

I want Arno to be alive and just have epilepsy.

Arno could do everything before I could.

He was first to be born, with the cord round his neck.

Lack of oxygen.

He was already good at getting attention.

Arno was earlier with peeing on the pot, writing, naming the capital cities of Europe, mental arithmetic. And dying.

Arno wanted to be a stuntman.

He was convinced that he would pull off a really big stunt one day.

Well he's done it. The great disappearing trick.

Now that he's gone, he's in my parents' heads the whole time.

It's Arno this and Arno that.

Even if they think of me they're thinking of Arno, then they think: As long as nothing happens to our Nora.

They don't see me, they just see the repeat of the horrorfilm with Arno in the title role. It doesn't matter how often I say: 'I haven't got epilepsy, I'm staying with you, really, I love you, I'm staying I'm staying.'

It's always those frightened eyes.

I'm not Nora, I've become 'The sister of Arno'.

'Arno the Samurai'.

*(makes sword-fighting movements)* Ichi. Ni. San. Shi. Go. Roku.

The Japanese are respectable people.

They do their best, work long and hard.

Japanese children get the best results at school.

The Japanese are super polite. T

hey smile as they're shoved onto the metro like sardines.

In their spare time they read strip cartoons in which women's heads are chopped off, children are raped every which way, men skewer each other with swords.

Fountains of blood, gunge and guts on those spotless Japanese streets... that's the kind of strip cartoons they read, and then they go to sleep smiling, or off to work again.

'You never know what those Japanese are thinking, really feeling.

My mother says.

My mother is just like a Japanese herself.

She acts as though there's nothing the matter.

When Arno died my mother went nuts and my father went bald.

Grief doesn't do a thing for your looks.

One day the boiler breaks down.

My father sits there, my mother just shrugs.

I go next-door and ring the bell.

'The pipes are furred up. Blocked,' says the man next door.

He takes the boiler to bits, takes out a part and pours caustic soda into it.

Sssssss. A quarter of an hour later all the limescale's gone.

I shout: 'Hey mum, we've got lovely hot water again.'

She doesn't react.

My mother's all furred up too. Bricked up. She doesn't cry.

She doesn't want to cry. Because she doesn't want Arno to be dead.

Maybe she cries when we're not looking. Inside.

All those tears stay inside.

There's a kind of limestone in tears too, I think.

My mother is completely white on the inside from all those tears, all that limestone.

When my mother dies, and her body decomposes, there'll be a porcelain mother left over.

A white vase made of grief.

I sometimes go into Arno's room.

I think: I'm not allowed to go in here.

If I do go in then I'll get an epileptic fit.

Or grey hair or patches of eczema all over me in fluorescent colours so that all the children at school will make fun of me.

I hope that he'll just be lying on his bed, reading a Manga comic.

I open the door and Arno's things are all sitting there quietly.

As if he's just popped out, but might come back any minute.

As if the computer, his electric train, the thousands of airfix aeroplanes, the remote control cars, the books, his Nintendo, Batman, Spiderman and Samurai on the wall, are all holding their breath and will keep holding it until he comes back and then go (*sigh of relief*).

My father comes in.

I see red eyes, and I know how late it is.

It's too late. It will always be too late.

I put my arms round him. He starts to shudder.

Then he crumples up. He cries with deep sobs.

I don't want to see it.

My father who is always big and strong turns into a heartbroken little person.

I fetch a box of tissues from the bathroom.

He keeps pulling tissues out, blowing his nose, screwing them up.

He is a little heap of misery next to a mountain of screwed up paper hankies.

I want to comfort him.

I stroke his balding head.

He looks up and tries to smile at me, but it doesn't really work.

I want to say something kind but I don't really know what.

I go and sit on Arno's bed.

'Daddy, if I put all the hankies that I've soaked through end to end, then the whole of Europe would be covered in one huge soaking wet sheet.'

My father wipes his nose.

He presses a kiss to the crown of my head and closes the door.

When he's gone I pray: God if you exist, please make everything all right again.

God, if you don't exist, please make everything all right again.

But God hasn't been in touch at all.

God is a deaf mute. Or a great big sadist, up there in the clouds.

I haven't had any plasters or handkerchiefs from up there.

I couldn't keep it up any longer.

I turned Arno into my little brother.

The littler my brother is, the littler the pain.

*(holds index fingers and thumbs together and peers through the tiny gap)*

That's how little Arno is.

He lives under my skin, washes in my tears.

He's a cartoon character in the pupils of my eyes.

Arno dances on the tip of my tongue.

If it's cold he warms himself on my breath.

At night I give him a small dark room in my heart.

He sleeps on his left side. I sleep on my right.

Our cheeks touching.

We fall asleep together. We have the same dreams.

Only twins can have the same dreams.

This is our dream:

Dream: Nora pushes a laughing Arno forward.

Arno sings the Sleeping Beauty song. Mother puts the prince's cloak round his shoulders, puts a crown on his head, tidies his hair. The father joins Nora, Arno, the mother.

The whole family sings the song. Nora throws a handful of rose petals over the prince.

Sleeping Beauty song.

Dearest, my dearest

You're lying so still

Your smile is so frozen

Your body so chill

A hundred years waiting

The time will arrive

When icicles melt

And your eyes come alive

You bloom and you grow

in our hearts where you dwell

One day you will wake  
Like the fairytale tells

Sleep, Sleeping Beauty  
A kiss on your mouth.  
A rose on your cheeks  
Eternally ours.

© Hanneke Paauwe, Brussels, 2005.