

Sample Translation

Desire:

**Carnal Lust in
Life and Literature**

By Sissel Gran

Foreword

In all my years as a psychologist, I have worked in the service of goodness; I have been – and remain – a helper. This role, or rather this peculiar *vocation*, has brought me meaning and joy, wonder and knowledge, but also countless confrontations with the painful side of life. The impact of all these human destinies has not left me untouched: I have been marked by what I have seen and experienced along the way. That's just the way it is – I suppose that's what they call experience. But where do I want to go now, with this book about desire? That's the eternal question I ask myself every time I embark on a new writing project. *Why are you doing this?*

The answer is the same as usual: I am writing to gain a deeper understanding of what I think and believe about the difficult questions in life, because what I think and believe changes over time. I am changed, just as the world is changed. Now more than previously I recognise how powerful the forces opposing love and goodness are. Greed, poor judgement and lack of empathy impinge on our relationships to destructive effect, hurting and harming us. The same is true of the relationship between humans and the environment. There, too, greed, poor judgement and lack of empathy lead to destruction of the climate, loss of species diversity, terrorism, migration, political collapse – and now a global pandemic. I cannot deny that this backdrop leaves me more fearful for the future of all living beings than before. Hence *desire* – this concept of biblical dimensions.

Although I'm no Bible scholar, I still feel a kinship with the Bible's view of humanity as bearer of both light and darkness. And I want to take a closer look at this. We carry goodness within us, but also the seeds of destruction. The need for safety and connection and community lives in us, from cradle to grave, but it coexists with the need for rupture, transgression and wild irresponsibility. I have witnessed all kinds of wildness: violence, rage, jealousy, ecstasy, the yearning for intoxication, infidelity, obsession, infatuations. Much of

this wildness is dark, and it is extremely physical. It is sunk in our *flesh* and it feels uncontrollable – like the time a woman tells me about standing outside an unfamiliar door, desperate to kill the woman behind it, the woman who had been revealed as her husband’s lover. She clenches her fists and the skin around her mouth whitens as she tells her tale, even though the event lies many years back in time. A man leaps to his feet in the therapy room, ready to strike his partner because she’s the silent type, and silence makes him panic. His eyes roll and I have to make myself bigger than I am, take a firm grip on him and speak in my most soothing, ‘amygdala’ voice to halt the blow. Afterwards, he weeps uncontrollably, incapable of understanding his own reaction; it was so terrifying to feel that urge to do harm, to lose his grip on his rational will. The feeling of being someone else, of giving in to an animal urge can be shocking.

‘The urges of the flesh pass all bounds in the absence of controlling will,’ writes the French thinker and author, Georges Bataille, in his book *Eroticism*. Bataille defines eroticism as ‘assenting to life even in death,’ an existential premise that is both a fundamental possibility and a constant threat. And that is where one finds oneself as a therapist, sitting face to face with people who are struggling between possibility and threat, choice and destiny, common sense and emotion. ‘Flesh,’ says Bataille, ‘is the extravagance within us set up against the law of decency.’ And that is where I want to go now, after witnessing so much wayward desire over my years as a therapist and a person. I want to investigate carnal lust, the *something* inside us that makes us act against our own convictions – be unfaithful, yell at our kids, insult our beloved, drink ourselves into a stupor, hit, gamble, break speed limits. If we shut our eyes to this *something*, it sneaks up on us from behind. I’m a psychologist and a therapist. So solutions are expected. You won’t find them in this book: this is no couple therapy handbook or self-help manual. I am writing this for readers who are looking to gain a

better understanding of desire – their own and other people’s – and to become more aware of what unleashes that wildness in us humans.

*Love bears all things, believes all things,
hopes all things, endures all things.*

*So now faith, hope and love abide,
these three;
but the greatest of these
is love.*

Thus runs Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians in *The New Testament*. We know the words well. The vicar reads them to the bride and groom as friends and family wipe away their tears. But Paul’s letter is no lyrical bridal speech: it is a warning to a divided congregation in Corinthia, a congregation that is ‘of the flesh and behaving only in a human way,’ a congregation riven by hostility, envy, strife and adultery. This division, Paul says, must be healed with love, and he who commits adultery must be delivered to Satan. The friendly voice we are accustomed to hearing takes on a sharper tone if we read Paul’s letter in its entirety. Nowadays, apostles, fathers of the church and congregations no longer serve as a bulwark against what used, in the olden days, to be called the forces of evil. We are no longer kept in our place by threats of Satan, damnation or expulsion. For the first time in history, we feel we are absolutely alone in the universe, responsible not only for ourselves, but also for nature and the climate.

All of us at some point have found ourselves face to face with something alien inside us and had this sense: that we may sometimes end up doing the opposite of what we think is

right. We are walking contradictions. We long for safety yet yearn for excitement. We want the protection of the familiar yet thirst for the unknown. We avoid the uncertain yet are drawn to the dangerous. We want to be honest and law-abiding yet are attracted to the forbidden. We are like an equation that simply doesn't work out.

With our faith in common sense and goodwill, we may risk denying the existence of a passion concealed within us that can render us helpless when it crops up in the wrong place at the wrong time. The question is whether we can better equip ourselves to deal with our desire by bringing it out into the light and acknowledging its existence. That question is the subject of this book. And unlike Paul, who said, 'I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children', I promise the reader no more than a guided tour through the light and darkness in the company of one who is, herself, fumbling for answers.

The stranger inside

‘It kind of wasn’t me,’ she said. ‘It wasn’t me who was lying, who continued to meet that man, who placed her family in jeopardy, who defied all common sense. It wasn’t even as if my body wanted this because it shied away from what I was in the process of doing. There was *something else* inside me, something I hadn’t known before, and this *something* in me took over. I couldn’t stop it, even though my behaviour sometimes made me weep in terror. Even all these years later I still don’t understand it. How could I?!’

Is there an answer to her question ‘How could I?!’ – other than the usual, brutal, dry and rational response: ‘You’re the one who chose it, you knew what you were doing’ And that’s true: she *did* know; but why does our better judgement sometimes become ineffectual? Why do we override our own common sense? Suddenly *something* may stir in a person, compelling them to alien and incomprehensible behaviour. It can happen to even the meekest and most responsible of us, and it feels wild, crazy, terrible. We so badly want to believe in the rational human, in goodwill, morality and decency. We condemn the desperate declaration: ‘It just happened!’ We are proud and stern – until the day that same *something* abruptly stirs in us – not unlike what Henrik Ibsen describes as the ‘wild, uncontrollable passion’ that Rebekka West feels for Johannes Rosmer in Rosmersholm: ‘It swept over me like a storm over the sea – like one of the storms we have in winter in the north. They catch you up and rush you along with them, you know, until their fury is expended. There is no withstanding them.’ Ibsen’s drama is steeped in seduction, guilt and suicide. Rosmer’s barren wife, Beate, Rebekka West and Rosmer all drown themselves in the millrace. The play met with a cool reception in 1886 and I can see why, because the theme is not a pleasant one. For many people, it may have hit a nerve. Indirectly, Ibsen makes Rebekka’s desire the cause of disaster; she insinuates herself between Rosmer and Beate with snake-like treachery and, as it says in the Bible, ‘the wages of sin are death’. That still applies. Sexual desire can make us

unscrupulous, we may commit unspeakable acts that ruthlessly harm those closest to us – and ourselves – and that may be punished.

People didn't like hearing this in 1886 and we still don't like it today. We would rather ignore our dark side, the stranger inside who is beyond our understanding. I shall try to unpack this, but in order to do so, I will need to draw on material from literature and drama, as well as from my own practice as a psychologist – although only occasionally, because my clients' stories of infidelity and desire and wild behaviour make them so vulnerable. When I do lift the veil on my therapy room, the stories and the people are, of course, anonymised and altered to ensure that no one will recognise them. If, nonetheless, you recognise yourself in them, that is because of our shared humanity. We cannot help but identify with other people's lives.

A man once wrote to me and told me how hard it had been to conquer his passionate love for a colleague. He refrained from sex and secret encounters and managed to rein in his intense desire for her. Before then, he had always viewed other people's affairs and infidelities with scorn, but his days as a high-minded moralist were definitely over. He understood what he had previously failed to grasp: *something* can take such a powerful hold on a person that their willpower virtually dissolves. He had never told anybody about his struggle to put an end to this thing that was tugging at him like a force of nature. It felt inhuman *not* to give in to it. He had cursed what he called his compulsive relationship to monogamy, his devotion to family values and what he viewed as his own unhealthy sense of duty and responsibility. All he had wanted to do was to plunge in, but he didn't. For a long time he grieved over what he had renounced and felt he had betrayed something deep in his soul. Neither his wife nor any of his close friends knew a thing about it. He never spoke of it to anyone. The ensuing loneliness had felt absolute. He had felt like a wounded soldier, abandoned on the battlefield.

Translation: Lucy Moffatt

He contacted me because he had read something I wrote about desire. It made him feel less alone in his experience and he simply wanted to share it – nothing more. He told me he was glad he made the choice he did. His relationship with his wife was warm and amicable. He had given his children a secure home and now they had flown the nest and gone out into the world. He was contented. But now and then he felt regret and grief about the vital and life-affirming feeling he had experienced and had to relinquish back then. Many would say he made the only right choice. That's true, I reckon he did, and it cost him a great deal, but at the same time he won something. After this shattering encounter with himself he was a changed man. He understood more about his own emotional life, his unknown ego, and he became less judgemental of his fellow humans and what we call moral failings.

Many people do not speak to others about their erotic dreams, thoughts, feelings and experiences. They don't even speak to their partner about them, as if they were observing an ancient prohibition against revealing a deep secret: that they are sexual beings. Unlike animals, whose mating rituals are driven solely by instinct, without any thought for their actions, a human being's sexuality is veiled in mystery. We can put almost anything else on display: the clothes we wear, the car we drive, the books we read, the food we eat, our home, our opinions, the work to which we dedicate ourselves, the ideology we live by, the politics we support or detest, our worldview, child-rearing practices – all this we can reveal, chat and chuckle about, but our sexual life is exempt from public disclosure. Yet sexuality is constantly in the spotlight in our culture, ceaselessly subjected to media scrutiny; but none of this nudity, focus on the physical, porn and endless headlines about 'how to spice up your sex life' necessarily brings us any closer to understanding the complex nature of eroticism and desire. Most people hide away as a matter of course when they have sex, whether they're masturbating or having sex with another person, because these activities have a *non-human*

aspect that transgresses usual socially accepted behaviour. Sex is also prohibited in public places.

When Kristopher Schau and the band Cumshots played the Quart Festival in 2004, a young couple (members of the Fuck for Forest environmental charity) copulated on stage before an open-mouthed (and cheering) public. I caught a glimpse of the stunt on TV and can't deny that I flinched. Norway was in shock the next day. The media ran amok. The band agreed to pay a fine but Schau said he thought it was sad that 'screwing is less acceptable than violence'. I agree with him on that, but sex is violence's cousin. All the naked couple demonstrated with their exuberant, doggy-style sex on stage was just how closely related sex and violence are. An intense sexual encounter in which partners howl and snarl, faces contorted, is not a pretty sight. It is easy to imagine the surprise of a person ignorant of the madness of sexuality, Bataille writes, if, from the side-lines, he 'witnessed unseen the lovemaking of a woman who had struck him as particularly distinguished. He would think she was sick, just as mad dogs are sick. Just as if some mad bitch had usurped the personality of the dignified hostess of a while back'.

There are good reasons why parents do their best to prevent their children from catching Mum and Dad in a sweaty, groaning, grabbing clinch, like a pair of battling beasts. If, despite their efforts, the child finds them in flagrante, Dad will shout 'Me and Mummy are just playing'. As the child eagerly clambers into their bed to join in the fun it can be tough for the adults to shut off the blood flow and become themselves again, changing back into daylight Mum and Dad in the blink of an eye.

First-time sex is a transgression. For some the experience is ecstatic, for others, it is sheer horror and for a great many people it is just okay; whatever the case, everyone feels changed in some way afterwards. Some feel they have gained something, others that something has been taken away. First-time sex for girls has been described as a ritual rape, no

matter how consensual the sex is. It brings to mind that anecdote about the bride preparing to be deflowered: there she lay on the bed, quiet and pale, with a note on her chest: ‘Go ahead, Henry. I’ve taken chloroform.’

The most recent book by the French writer, Annie Ernaux, *A Girl’s Story*, deals with a first experience of sex that can only be described as an assault, but which the author nonetheless refuses to label clearly. The book is a memoir in which Ernaux switches between her young and her older self. The young Ernaux, called A. in the book, is 17, and the narrator, synonymous with the author, is approaching 80. She has wanted to forget ‘this girl’, she writes, forget her pride, madness and desire; but now there’s some urgency, because the time left to Ernaux is growing shorter – and it strikes me, as I write my own book, that my time is running out too. She writes: ‘I am haunted by the idea that I could die without ever having written about “the girl of ’58,” as I very soon began to call her. Someday there will be no one left to remember. What that girl and no other experienced will remain unexplained, will have been lived for no reason.’

So, how is one to recall something that happened nearly 60 years ago? It is difficult to remember concrete events, difficult to remember who did what, what we thought and why we behaved the way we did. Anybody who has tried to reconstruct episodic memories knows that they can get tangled up, seduce us into believing something that may not have happened – or at any rate, not in the way we think it did. But emotions form a different kind of memory bank; an emotional truth is different from a cognitive memory. I don’t remember all that much from my own childhood and youth, but those things I do remember well are often linked to one emotion in particular, the nastiest of them all: shame. Actions and events that have caused me shame, that have provoked intense negative feelings, are like ‘brain tattoos’, as Siri Hustvedt put it in a talk during an authors’ seminar at Aschehoug publishers in summer 2019. As I sat there, I recognised the truth of her words. Ernaux even calls her own

shame a privilege – precisely because the shame attached to the desire she felt all those years ago is what returns ‘the girl of ’58’ to her. She writes: ‘I am endowed by shame’s vast memory, more detailed and implacable than any other.’

The sexual debut we hear about in *A Girl’s Story* is confusing but the event is far from unambiguous. It takes place on A.’s third day at a holiday camp where she has come to work as a camp counsellor for the children. It is the chief counsellor, H., who drags her into his male world. A. has been brought up Catholic under the watchful eye of her mother. She is an over-sheltered only child. She has never spent any time away from home. What little she knows about life comes from books and women’s magazines. She has never seen or touched a male sex organ, but she is ‘all desire and pride,’ writes the author, and ‘she is waiting to fall madly in love’. So: ready and yet not. Hers will be a brutal encounter with the dream. A. dances feverishly with H. at a party; he is described as in his forties – burly and blond, with the beginnings of a belly, a man who decides – but he is actually only 22 years old, yet experienced. He holds her tight and stares at her in a way that she has never been held or looked at before. He kisses her hard and they leave together, arms around each other. She is ‘overcome by a heady panic’.

Shortly after that, A. finds herself undressed on the bed in the darkness of her own room with a naked male body. His member is big and stiff. He can’t penetrate her because she’s a virgin and tight, so he thrusts his sex organ in and out between her thighs, hurting her so much that she cries out; he scolds her. ‘She would rather be anywhere than there,’ writes Ernaux, ‘but she does not leave. She feels cold. She could get up, turn the lights back on, tell him to get dressed and leave. Or get dressed herself and leave him in the lurch, return to the party. She could have. But I know the idea never crossed her mind. For her, there was no turning back, things had to run their course. She had no right to abandon this man in the state he was in, raging with desire, all because of her.’

It is a long scene. It continues in his room. Afterwards, it all seems unreal to A. She is ‘in a stupor, as if intoxicated by the event’. My God, I think when I’ve finished reading, the details are revolting. I feel sick to my stomach, probably also because I can identify with A. in a way – the scenario is far from unfamiliar. I ask myself: That terrible inability to say no when faced with another person’s egocentric, ruthless desire – is it just the result of the other person’s power, our own politeness, our legacy of female submissiveness, our state of frozen anxiety, our fear of exclusion? Or is there something else besides? Could it be that our own secret, dark desire plays a role here too, a desire we utterly refuse to acknowledge, utterly fail to feel that we understand because the alien nature of this sexuality is not a consciously integrated part of us? Could it be that our own hidden desire helps prevent us from rejecting an unwanted lover, helps prevent us from stamping our foot, yelling NO and leaving the room, the bed, the crime scene?

I have vague memories of just such a scene from far back in time; vague memories of the treacherous compliance, a compliance that was driven not by fear of reprisals or fear of disappointing the chance lover, but by a peculiar, covert fascination at being the object of another’s desire, not to mention by one’s own curiosity – *what will happen?* The fact of gleaning little or no pleasure from the experience didn’t matter then and there. But did I feel used? No. Should I have? Possibly. Instead, such experiences were chalked up as part of life, this messy, far from streamlined life of ours. The interesting thing is that Annie Ernaux never uses the word ‘assault’ or ‘rape’ about what happened to her. The shame A. comes to feel does not derive from the event, nor from the fact that she was weak and failed to repulse H. – a ruthless young man who showed A. a picture of his fiancée immediately after having his way with her – but from the fact that he turned his back on her at once, that she was unable to stop desiring him and that she was called a slut by all the other camp counsellors.

She didn't feel like a victim. More shame followed, Ernaux writes, when she learned – among others from reading Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* – that she had been an object, not a subject, and that she had been proud of being an object of desire. But how is one supposed to behave, how is one to be a free subject? The question remains just as relevant today. I return to it and I have no answer, but it is, of course, about being true to oneself, which is at least as difficult as being true to another person.

Judgement Day

I think about all the stories I've heard of desire gone astray, from men and women alike: fleeting affairs, one-night stands, long-term liaisons. So much ecstasy, yet so much bottomless despair. So much feverish joy, yet so much shame and self-loathing. So much grief and rage when the day of truth dawns and a secret relationship is laid bare. Classic and contemporary literature, films, plays and music are all awash with tales of desire, betrayal, shame, revenge and death. It's a bloody topic, a rewarding topic and we love it – just as long as it doesn't affect us. Truth is often at least as dramatic as fiction. Take a well-known example most people are familiar with. When, in 1998, President Bill Clinton was found to have conducted a sexual relationship with a 22-year-old White House intern, the hitherto unknown Monica Lewinsky, a tsunami of horror, rage, media hounding and schadenfreude was unleashed in the US. The whole business must have been a nightmare, not just for him but for his wife, Hillary, and the intern, Monica Lewinsky, too.

For the longest time, Clinton denied having had 'sexual relations with that woman', but after being driven from pillar to post, he was ultimately forced to admit that it was true – Miss Lewinsky *had* sucked his penis in the Oval Office of the White House. According to Lewinsky, the two had shared nine intimate encounters between November 1995 and March 1997.

But surely the president must have heard the alarm bells ringing like crazy long before being unmasked? Surely he can't have thought that he could get away with it if he was caught out – or did he think he could, just like a Kennedy? Did he believe that he, the world's most powerful man, was untouchable, because his ego was puffed up out of all proportion? It is rather a case of desire trumping everything, making even the most exposed person gamble everything they hold dear: honour, position, career, family.

I have seen this up close plenty of times: senior executives, politicians, editors, authors and prominent artists who have destroyed their marriage for the sake of a swift screw at a seminar or a longstanding illicit affair. In some cases, their partners brought them back in from the cold once they'd got it all out of their system – much to the public's dismay. After all, who would want to take back an unfaithful traitor? More people than we might think actually *would* choose to do that, but it comes at a price, not least for the deceived partner. Take Hillary Clinton. As the injured party, one might have expected her to garner all the sympathy; not so. In many women's eyes, she made almost as big a blunder by sticking with her cheating husband.

For many women, that was like a red rag to a bull, a massive betrayal; by choosing to stand by her man instead of leaving him, Hillary Clinton was spitting on them all. In the TV documentary *Hillary*, she didn't mince her words, saying that she had never shaken off her husband's affair with Monica Lewinsky, which was probably also a factor when she lost the presidency to Donald Trump in 2016. On top of everything else, she pointed out that the person her husband had an affair with all those years back was *an adult* after all, that Monica Lewinsky was not simply an innocent victim. That was where everything went totally wrong; women saw red again because Monica Lewinsky was a young woman who had been flirted into submission and exploited by a man with tremendous power.

But what about the president himself? How did things work out for him? Born in 1946, he is now an elderly man. In TV interviews his age is starting to show. He is thinner and his voice is weaker. When he is asked why he was unfaithful to Hillary back then, between 1995 and 1997, he struggles to find an explanation. And the same is true of most people who have been unfaithful, this isn't unusual. He regrets it, he is sorry about what happened, he thinks it's terrible to see how Monica Lewinsky has struggled to regain a normal life all these years.

But when it comes to an ‘explanation’ for the affair, he can’t give one, saying things like ‘Everybody’s life has disappointments and pressures and terrors.’

The hosts of *TYT/The Young Turks* (a liberal American show on YouTube) screen clips from *Hillary* in which Bill Clinton is asked about the affair. They howl in scorn, maliciously mocking his words and calling Clinton pathetic and ‘the world’s most disgusting human being’ because they think he has described Monica Lewinsky as a ‘stress reliever’. It isn’t easy being a repentant sinner. But *everyone* suffers from mud-slinging after an infidelity; that’s why it’s so dangerous to end up in a love triangle. The unfaithful party, the injured party and the interloper are all burdened by shame. All risk negative attention: the affair as a stigma, as a stain that can never be removed – like the notorious stain on Monica Lewinsky’s dress, apparently the result of Bill Clinton’s ejaculation.

The young intern had a tough time of it. For many she became a hate object and was labelled a home-wrecker, the snake in paradise. For others she became a symbol of the way powerful men can exploit women, a feminist icon. She went from perceiving herself as an active subject, a person who wanted this relationship, to seeing herself as an object, a victim of assault, a person who barely survived a massive attack on her integrity. Both things may be true, but it is difficult for both oneself and others to accept that anything can be so tangled up. We generally understand situations and events with hindsight, and experience emotions as either-or – otherwise we get confused. We need to get an overview, we need to categorise, clean up, cleanse. The only problem is that *the stranger inside* may take us to places where our rational ego does not want to go.

The psychiatrist, Finn Skårderud, interviewed 80-year-old Annie Ernaux, who has won many new readers in Norway in recent years. During the interview, the conversation turns to *A Girl’s Story*, which Skårderud describes as ‘a heart-breaking study of a sexual debut. Rape, self-destruction, infatuation, submission, rebellion’. Annie Ernaux has worried away at

sexuality and desire throughout her writing career. She says: ‘Sex is the prerequisite for life. But it makes a mess of morality and is always complicated.’

I like the fact that an 80-year old woman can express this in such a frank and forthright way. But perhaps it is precisely because age washes away one’s reservations. I have seen this many times along the way in my encounters with older people. They radiate a particular kind of fearlessness, they don’t have the time to dress up the truth. They display a directness that the Greek called *parrhesia* – telling it like it is: without any intention of doing harm or asserting themselves, yet at the same time well aware that they are taking a chance by saying what they do.

By the way, in a book I wrote about ageing, I promised myself to do just that – to speak out more while I still have time to do so. That is probably one of the reasons why I am writing on this provocative topic, rather than the beautiful side of love and how to solve emotional complications in a couple relationship. The *mess* Ernaux speaks about is something I have both experienced myself and observed countless times from my vantage point in the therapist’s chair: the panic that arises when morality has suffered a major blow and we no longer have the words to describe what has happened.

But back to the unfaithful party’s desperate question: ‘How could I?!’ Is there an answer? Are we allowed to try and explain ourselves? Of course. Bill Clinton’s explanation may have been true. He may have felt weighed down by tremendous responsibility. He may have been afraid of failure. He had been married to the same woman for twenty years. Who knows how much romance there was in the marriage. ‘Don’t you think it might be as ordinary and banal as that he felt horny?’ said a male friend and colleague. ‘Horniness can make people do the most pathetic things – I remember that from when I was young!’ Yes, of course he was horny, but there was something else too. Monica Lewinsky has said many times that she told Clinton she was in love with him, that she saw their liaison as a

relationship of mutual love. Something odd happens to many people when somebody says the words: 'I'm in love with you'. They feel seen. They suddenly feel attractive. They feel renewed. And they become more risk-tolerant and walk straight into danger. It is the awakening of desire, the overwhelming emotion that takes the wheel and assumes control.

And here we shall leave Bill Clinton. We will never know what really happened inside him, how he could have placed himself, his wife and a 22-year-old woman in such a terrible bind. But the story is familiar. The couple relationship can leave us feeling neglected, lonely and invisible – or simply burdened by an intolerable sense of boredom. Our eroticism and lust may feel dead and buried. We may feel old and grey in our thirties. And suddenly, an eye winks at us, a voice speaks to us, a body brushes against ours, we say yes to a cup of coffee, a glass of wine, a secret meeting. Suddenly we feel vigorous, our vitality surges, like sap rising in the spring. At the same time, there's a quiver of fear inside, because we know we have taken a step into danger and that judgement day is approaching.