

My Son

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Translated by Binesh Hass

I only noticed him when he stood between me and the sun. Above me, a single shadow, his muddy toes were enthroned on the edge of my beach towel.

I took my shirt, which had served as a sunscreen, off my head and sat up. I held one hand pressed against my bikini top, which I had only loosely placed on my chest for an even tan. I looked upwards at him, my eyes level with his battered knees.

He looked straight at me, a rapturous look. Although I don't remember all the details, I remember that his eyes were light blue. I remember because they stood against the uncovered sky.

Even so, I would have been scared even if I hadn't seen his hand in his trunks. He was just so close to me. I pushed myself away from him, my bottom falling unto the hot sand, then I jumped up and took a few steps away, burning the soles of my feet in the process. That seemed to excite rather than bother him, his pink head now peering out of his shorts. He cheered, exposing the upper row of his teeth, and then his lips closed again into a blissful streak. A streak that bent upwards to a smile when I screamed at him. I shouted in three languages.

"Hau ab!"

"Go away!"

"Va-t'en!"

Maybe he consciously ignored my screaming, but more likely he didn't really understand what he was doing—his lower jaw went straight down into his wide neck, his eyes were wide apart, his head smaller than others. His smile ... all in all a sight that one would doubtless call simple. Maybe he was handicapped—he certainly was—because seconds later a man rushed out of the sea and ushered him away, hastily and with much embarrassment apologizing for the behaviour of his son: "Veuillez excuser mon fils," he said.