



Source: Editorial, 'A chaotic road to democracy', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 01/10/05.

Tags: [water](#), [sex](#)

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Dr Maurice Cohen adjusted his tie in the mirror of a black marble bathroom on the twenty-sixth floor of the inner city hotel. It was an Yves St Laurent red silk with dark blue stripes tied in a double Windsor knot. His shirt was by Hardy Amies in pale blue cotton with a bone stiffened collar in white with matching double cuffs studded with gold links offset by a tile of black onyx.

Dr Cohen was clean shaven, redolent of Gucci cologne and sported a carefully coiffed sheaf of steel gray hair. The full effect was impressive and he knew it with the kind of comfortable self assurance common amongst those men who were leaders in their field.

Dr Cohen's field of specialty was water; more specifically, the legal aspects of water in a global context, a subject that had grown markedly in importance over the past ten years during which time Maurice Cohen had carefully constructed a career path which had brought him to the point where he was this morning. So highly regarded were his thoughts and opinions on the subject that he had become something of a sex object on the international speaker circuit, famous for his urbane, witty public face; attractive to members of both sexes because of the vague sexual ambivalence, almost indifference that he displayed even looking as good as he did for his fifty years.

Cohen was a former Rhodes scholar who excelled at fencing, sailing and chess. His pale blue eyes and lightly tanned skin glowed with the radiance only good health and wealth could induce and wherever he went, even if it were only to buy a cigar in the hotel foyer, heads would turn without quite knowing why. Charisma can be the most mysterious of charms, especially when the carrier gives the impression of being unaware of their powerful allure and Cohen was a master of that particular brand of fake.

He took one final look in the mirror and polished his upper teeth with his index finger for no particular reason. His finger smelt of pussy and as tempting as it was to allow it to linger for the day he rinsed his hands with soap and water and dried them off on the thick white hand towel next to the sink. His thoughts dwelt for a moment on the chemistry of vaginal excretions and he marveled at the fact that, despite having showered and washed his hair this morning, the musky aroma had resisted the solvent powers of soap and shampoo. He smelt his fingers again and was satisfied that the smell was sufficiently disguised as he strolled back into the living room of his suite and increased the volume on the flat screen television to pick up some scraps of news from the BBC.

The door of the bedroom was ajar and he could see the

maid reassembling herself. Wearing only bra and panties she was slipping her uniform over her head arching her breast as she did so. Cohen marveled at the beauty of the female breast as he took in the stock market report. The breakfast tray lay untouched on the dining table so he poured himself a black coffee and tore off a chunk of cold croissant. The maid slipped into her shoes and began to fix her hair.

She was about thirty years of age and her name was Lucille, a single mother of two boys who lived on the outskirts of the city and had been working at the hotel for three years. This was not the first time she had had sex with a guest but it would be one of the most memorable owing to the animal spontaneity of it all. She shivered with guilty arousal at the thought of it as she pinned up her dark curly hair. She wouldn't bother taking a shower, she didn't have time and she was more than happy to smell like sex for the day. It had been a while between drinks. All done she shuffled into the living room and gave the impression of performing some maidly duties: straightening cushions, checking coffee cups and the like.

Cohen said nothing but simply smiled at her without showing his teeth. She looked down at the carpet and blushed without showing it. She was already wet again and he was hardening but it was time to go for both of them so she moved towards the door. Maurice Cohen reached into his pocket, drew out a Cartier wallet and extracted several crisp notes which he inserted into Lucille's panties giving her a peck on the cheek for good measure. Lucille waltzed out the door as unobtrusively as she could under the circumstances. Walking down the hall she reflected that the only word spoken between them was 'Yes'.

Dr Maurice Cohen slipped into his Zegna jacket, took up his leather folio and, stuffing another piece of coffee soaked croissant between his well formed lips, slipped out the door and into the Paris day via the hotel lift. The air was crisp and it was going to be a successful day, he could feel it in his bones.

He decided to walk to the conference venue, mentally revising his speech as he walked. His subject was Water Rights in the Emerging Democracies of the Middle East. Cohen was on the brink of greatness and he wore it with all the aplomb his upbringing had bestowed upon him. Paris was awash with the kind of light that is perfectly suited to displays of greatness whether in architecture or individuals and the muted morning sun illuminated Dr Maurice Cohen as he marched on towards his destiny.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Boris Kelly.*