



Source: Jonathan Steele, 'Jaafari ignores British, US pleas to resign', *The Guardian*, Reuters in *Sydney Morning Herald* online, 06/04/06.

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Writer/s: [Ingrid Wassenaar](#)

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When the two men were settled at their café table, Anton ordered two lattes for them. He leant across the rickety table and asked if Cees was hungry. Cees felt bloated from the plane journey, and was sweating with exertion. He shook his head, and leant back in the uncomfortable iron-runged seat. There was a short silence between them. Then both started to talk at once.

'Geraldine's mother —'
'Where are you staying —?'

Anton stopped and waved his younger brother on. The coffees arrived and he stirred absentmindedly, as Cees detailed the rheumatic pains suffered by his mother-in-law. The woman was only four years older than he was. She was in a retirement village. Cees shuddered at the thought of going to one of these places himself. While Geraldine stuck with him, she was his guarantee that he never would.

'The old trout, she gets all Geraldine's time and energy. Always sulking in her living room, paid for by me, you understand.' Anton's face did not betray a clearly definable emotion, and Cees suddenly decided he had had enough.

'So, Anton, what are you doing with yourself these days?' he asked, in Dutch. He held Anton's gaze with more steadiness than he felt. Anton swiped a fly away, and broke the stare. 'Well, I'm in Auckland, I'm retired. It's a bit boring, I play a bit of golf with the old guys from the office now and then. See the girls. They have little kiddies now too, of course. I go and have dinner with Louise every other week or so.'

They were interrupted by the waitress coming to see if they wanted anything else. The mid-morning office crowd, coming to get sandwiches and takeout coffee, was filling the café and spilling out into the terrace where they were sitting. The waitress looked pointedly down at the lattes they nursed.

'Oh all right, I'll have a muffin. You, Cees?' Anton smiled at the girl. Cees caught the trace of lechery on his brother's face, and looked quickly down into the froth of the coffee. The barista had drawn a leaf in the foam, and Cees stirred it away with his spoon. Anton watched the receding buttocks of the waitress and turned back to his brother.

'They want us to go, we're not aesthetic enough for the North Sydney crowd', he grinned, and settled himself more firmly into the seat. '*Barst maar*.'

It was the first time Anton had spoken in Dutch, and Cees found himself grinning back like a dog at his older sibling. The skin of his face, greasy and gritty from the long flight, tugged around his eyes and cheeks.

'So you play golf?' he gushed, 'I never have. Can't imagine anything worse, walking about in the sun with a bunch of idiots, comparing handicaps. Geraldine does a lot, she has her friends, and she paints a bit, she goes to needlework

classes. We have lunch in a pub sometimes. It's fine. See the boys over from Holland, you know, in the summer, maybe Easter—their children are pretty much grown up now, can you believe it? Geraldine loves it, clucks and cooks and plays the mother.' It was a relief to chat. The warm sun on the parasol over their table soothed him now rather than burning him. His sweat stopped trickling down the side of his face under his baseball cap.

Anton chopped at his muffin with a fork, and hoisted lumps to his mouth. He watched Cees, and let him make all the running.

Cees trickled to a stop again, and the fiddling with the cold coffee resumed. The silences between the two older men were almost a smell that lingered around them. The waitress did not come back to them. Cees felt as though he had been in Australia for years, when it was closer to three hours. He could not imagine where the conversation would go, and how to start to tell Anton what he had come to say.

'Shall we...go for a walk?' he heard himself ask eventually. 'I feel so tired—the plane—it would help'.

Anton's chair scuffed back, and his brother planted two heavy hands on the flimsy table to hoist himself up. He was not overweight, Cees noted, but there was a red solidity to him that spoke of heart attacks and inflamed joints. The fingers were slightly swollen. Anton did not wear a ring. The table rocked violently as the big man stood up, and turned to walk to the café counter. Cees heaved himself out of the chair, his back stiff from the iron rungs, his trouser legs clinging to him with sweat. This time he was determined to pay, and managed to claw the travel wallet out over his waistband where it hung like a colostomy bag. The notes meant nothing to him, and he fished out a yellow bill marked 'fifty dollars'. Anton was waiting for the final amount to be rung up, and Cees shoved past the intervening tables, catching his foot on a woman's bag. She smiled up at him, as he excused himself.

'Here, let me', he panted. 'It's too much', said Anton. 'Of course not, I can buy my brother a coffee —' began Cees, but Anton interrupted him. 'No, the money, you're giving too much. It's only ten'. He had already slapped down the blue note, and was moving away back to the carpark. Cees could only follow, shuffling, sore. He allowed Anton to take them all the way back into the gloom of the basement before saying, 'Where are we going to walk?' Anton stopped and turned.

'Now, little brother, I don't think you're up to it, are you? Why don't you go to your friend's house, have a rest, and we can meet again.' Cees did not meet his eyes. The car park was hot, fetid with the stink of exhaust fumes. Wheels squeaked as they cornered the narrow lanes looking for parking spots.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Ingrid Wassenaar.