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Emilie has flown back into Paris for the weekend to collect her things—clothes, books, photo albums, CDs. It's hit me harder than I'd expected.

Gutted. I told Emilie I felt gutted.

'That is probably where you belong', she said.

Come again?

'In the gutter—that is probably where you belong.'

Oh, Ha Ha! Is she really an utter bitch, or is it still just her 'English-on-training-wheels'? The air in what was once our humble Paris apartment is fetid. No. Putrid!

I had been happy to accept the commission. I thought Emilie would be pleased. Four weeks' paid work in Berlin. A fine hotel on the Unter den Linden. Maybe some freebies to the Komische Oper. Okay, they sing everything in German, but at least their Rameau would be seriously high camp, with all the appropriate ornamentations—that would please her.

It had been years since I'd worked, and so directing an Australia Day musical benefit at the embassy in Berlin might be a fun gig. Great venue. Great ballroom. A hundred or so VIP guests standing around. So, best not to offend—nothing too provocative. Some expat opera singers, a few especially imported indigenous performers, a holidaying private school choir, a touring youth theatre group...whoever we can dig up. Peretta Angerek would apparently be in town. Hey! A baroque counter-tenor to entertain Emilie! I planned all the opening scenes of the benefit around him, only to find he was already booked to march in some Berlin gay pride carnival that night. The embassy tracked down some local Berliner called Emil who could sing much the same counter-tenor repertoire, and who's aunt lived somewhere in the Adelaide Hills, so they thought that was a close enough connection.

Emil was, I suppose, quite cute. The perfectly pretty blond Kraut—a Christopher Isherwood wet dream with a fast vibrato and a fabulous bottom...bottom range, that is.

Black out. And then, the eerie mania of Amanda Stewart's spoken voice, rabbiting on at ten-to-the-dozen about God only knows what. Tiny guttural explosions interrupting a myriad fragment of words. Thoughts. Gentle. Tantalising. Disturbing.

And then a battery of lamps ripping shafts of light through a narrow doorway. Emil standing there, beside a splendidly brunette cellist. A soft Purcell ground bass, meandering through the darkened space and then Emil's tender high soprano voice, at first pleading and then enveloping. This is what I dream about. Light and sound. Time and space. A movement of the senses. The stillness almost imperceptibly vibrating. All suspended.

Ah, sound! What would it be like to be deaf?
Unresponsive to sound or music? The human utterance?
To be dumb? Inarticulate? SILENT?

The Perth junior school choir is ridiculously cute. All stripped down to their undies...with their teachers' permission. Backlit. Perfect angels. And then straight off to bed before 'lights out'.

The ambassador's address is interminable, and how could I not have known that Emilie would meanwhile be rooting Emil in the embassy dunnies.

The Hip Hop artists are pushing the boundaries, but it's only for two minutes, and I don't think anyone can understand a word they're spitting into their microphones. The odd spluttered 'fuck' probably provides a kind of risqué frisson for this blue rinse set. I'm sure they think it's all very 'with it'. And I guess it provides the perfect soundtrack for Emil and Emilie's shenanigans in the powder-room.

I love marching bands, but this one is truly dreadful. What is it about geriatric Ozzie expats in Berlin who think it's hip to oom-pah-pah? Still it's kind of perverse fun watching them hobble their way across the space. 'Yep, that's right, gentlemen—straight out through those doors and close them behind you, please'...and get a wriggle on!

Ah! Silence before a smattering of polite applause.

Emilie was all too forthcoming about what had occurred that evening, as we stood at the taxi rank outside the embassy, and Emil loitered nonchalantly a little further down the road.

'I'm bored,' she said.

Mmmm. 'And I'm tired,' I replied.

'You never talk,' she said.

'And you never smile,' I replied, and hailed a cab. Emilie sauntered down the road toward her spoils.

Why is it I feel like a player in some 1970's François Truffaut soap opera?—yet, not nearly so well scripted, cast or directed. Emilie is no Fanny Ardant...though she's French, and so perhaps she thinks she is.

The next morning I rang Emilie's mobile. We arranged to meet at a cafe near the Brandenburg Gate. I waited, but she never arrived. I'd sort of expected this. This is what one spends most of one's life doing, of course...waiting. Inadvertently it disempowers you. I sat there and waited for something that never came. And so the next day I waited again, knowing she'd never come. I was in some kind of trance, some half sleep. When everything remains possible and nothing occurs.

Eventually I sensed I'd overstayed my welcome, and so I paid my bill and settled further down the road...sitting in the gutter...gutted...and feeling stupid...truly dumb...SILENT.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Nigel Kellaway with an acknowledgement to Amanda Stewart.