

Tekst 10

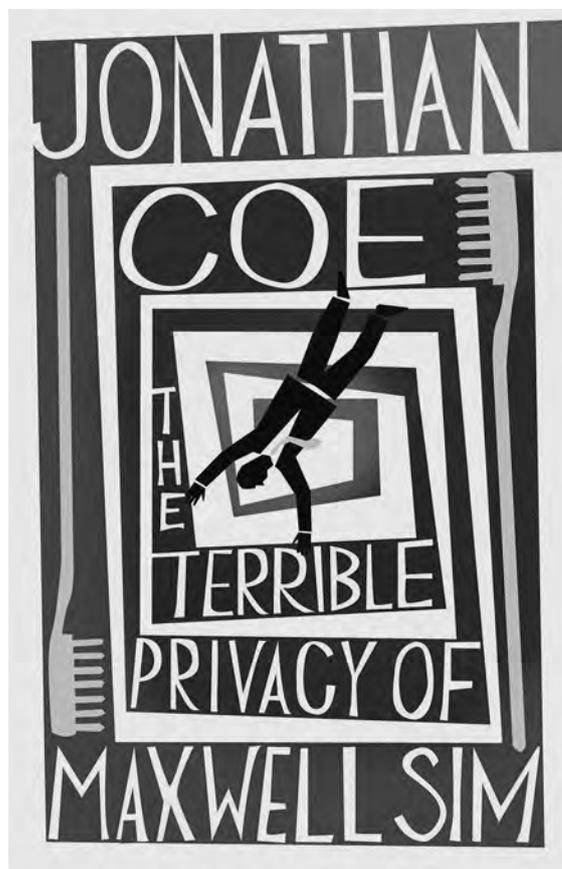
The following text is the first chapter of the novel The Terrible Privacy of Maxwell Sim, by Jonathan Coe.

Chapter I

When I saw the Chinese woman and her daughter playing cards together at their restaurant table, the water and the lights of Sydney harbour shimmering behind them, it set me thinking about Stuart, and the reason he had to give up driving his car.

I was going to say 'my friend Stuart', but I suppose he's not a friend any more. I seem to have lost a number of friends in the last few years. I don't mean that I've fallen out with them, in any dramatic way. We've just decided not to stay in touch. And that's what it's been: a decision, a conscious decision, because it's not difficult to stay in touch with people nowadays, there are so many different ways of doing it. But as you get older, I think that some friendships start to feel increasingly redundant. You just find yourself asking, 'What's the point?' And then you stop.

Anyway, about Stuart and his driving. He had to stop because of the panic attacks. He was a good driver, a careful and conscientious driver, and he had never been involved in an accident. But occasionally, when he got behind the wheel of a car, he would experience these panic attacks, and after a while they started to get worse, and they started to happen more often. I can remember when he first started telling me about all this: it was lunchtime and we were in the canteen of the department store in Ealing, where we worked together for a year or two. I don't think I can have listened very carefully, though, because Caroline was sitting at the same table, and things between us were just starting to get interesting, so the last thing I wanted to hear about was Stuart and his neuroses about driving. That must be why I never really thought about it again until years later, at the restaurant on Sydney harbour, when it all came back. His problem, as far as I can remember, was this. Whereas most people, as they watched the coming and going of cars on a busy road, would see a normal, properly functioning traffic system, Stuart could only perceive it as an endless



succession of narrowly averted accidents. He saw cars hurtling towards each other at considerable speeds, and missing each other by inches — time and time again, every few seconds, repeated constantly throughout the day. 'All those cars,' he said to me, 'only *just* managing not to crash into each other. How can people stand it?' In the end it became too much for him to contemplate, and he had to stop driving.

Why had this conversation just come back to me, tonight of all nights? It was 14 February 2009. The second Saturday in February. Valentine's Day, in case you hadn't noticed. The water and the lights of Sydney harbour were shimmering behind me, and I was dining alone since my father had, for various weird reasons of his own, refused to come out with me, even though this was my last evening in Australia, and the only reason for me visiting Australia in the first place had been to see him and try to rebuild my relationship with him. Right now, in fact, I was probably feeling more alone than I had ever felt in my life, and what really brought it home to me was the sight of the Chinese woman and her daughter playing cards together at their restaurant table. They looked so happy in each other's company. There was such a connection between them. They weren't talking very much, and when they did talk, it was about their card game, as far as I could tell, but that didn't matter. It was all in their eyes, their smiles, the way they kept laughing, the way they kept leaning in to each other. By comparison, none of the diners at the other tables seemed to be having any fun.

Tekst 10 The Terrible Privacy of Maxwell Sim

- 1p **34** Which of the following statements about Stuart is true?
- A He and the narrator were colleagues in a department store for a while.
 - B He made the narrator realise that close friendships are an illusion.
 - C His behaviour posed a threat to the relationship between the narrator and Caroline.
 - D His driving problems were caused by his inability to handle the heavy traffic in Sydney.
- 2p **35** Bepaal voor elke van de onderstaande beweringen over de hoofdpersoon of deze wel of niet in overeenstemming is met hoofdstuk 1.
- 1 Hij werd afgeleid door een vrouw toen Stuart het de eerste keer over zijn problemen had.
 - 2 Hij wordt aan Stuart herinnerd omdat hij in hetzelfde restaurant zit als waar hij met Stuart en Caroline heeft gegeten.
 - 3 Hij adviseerde Stuart om te stoppen met autorijden.
 - 4 Hij had zijn vader uitgenodigd om een familievete bij te leggen.
- Noteer "wel" of "niet" achter elk nummer op het antwoordblad.

The newspaper article below **precedes** chapter 1 in the novel *The Terrible Privacy of Maxwell Sim*, by Jonathan Coe.

Salesman found naked in car

Grampian Police patrolling the snowbound stretch of the A93 between Braemar and Spittal of Glenshee on Thursday night spotted a car apparently abandoned at the side of the road just below the Glenshee Ski Centre.

On closer inspection it became clear that the unconscious driver was still inside the car. Clothes belonging to the middle-aged man, who was almost naked, were found scattered throughout the vehicle. On the passenger seat beside him were two empty whisky bottles.

The mystery deepened as the policemen inspected the boot of the car and found two cardboard boxes containing more than 400 toothbrushes, as well as a large black bin liner filled with picture postcards of the Far East.

The man was suffering from severe hypothermia and was flown to Aberdeen Royal Infirmary by air ambulance. He was later identified as Mr Maxwell Sim, aged 48, of Watford, England.

Mr Sim was a salesman employed on a freelance basis by Guest Toothbrushes of Reading, a company specializing in ecologically friendly oral hygiene products. The company had gone into liquidation that morning.

Mr Sim has made a full recovery and is believed to have returned to his home in Watford. Police have not yet confirmed whether they will press charges for drink driving.

Aberdeenshire Press and Journal,
Monday, 9 March 2009

- 1p 36 Geeft de schrijver een aanwijzing dat Maxwell Sim uit het krantenartikel *Salesman found naked in car* en de ik-figuur uit hoofdstuk 1 dezelfde persoon zijn?
Zo nee, antwoord "Nee". Zo ja, citeer het zinsgedeelte dat je antwoord ondersteunt.