

WETink

Nigel Krauth

Rendez-vous

He met her in the lift. Or didn't meet her. 'Ascenseur,' he read, 'Appel,' not understanding the French. He thought back and realised he did not meet her in the lift.

He met her on the darkish staircase when he walked down, not taking the lift.

But that's not right. He saw half of her body disappear around the corner of the staircase as he took the stairs down. The backs of her legs, her grey coat tail. The stairway spiralled around the lift.

That wasn't meeting her. It was only *like* meeting her.

There was a mirror in the lift. He watched his face as he descended.

He turned away and looked out through the grating. He glimpsed her again as she took the stairs. Just the back of one leg. One high heel this time. A black stocking going.

It was winter.

He thinks he might see her tomorrow, catch her heels' snap on the stairs as he descends.

The place is close to the Palais de Justice. There are *advocats* everywhere.

He doesn't know her at all. Has never known her.

He didn't meet her in the lift. Or did meet her.

'*Appel*,' he read, '*Ascenseur*,' not understanding the French. He thought forward and realised he would meet her in the lift. Would meet her on the darkish staircase when he walked down, not taking the lift.

That could happen. Face-to-face. In the lift for the long ride down. Or up. Coming around the corner of the staircase, bumping into her as he took the stairs up, or down. Her legs seen first. The hem, the buttons on her coat. The lift going smoothly up and down inside the spiral of the staircase.

That wouldn't be meeting her. Only *like* meeting her.

Like meeting her? That wasn't meeting her at all.

He can either take the lift, or the stairs. He can't take both. Why would you want to take both?

Nigel Krauth's publications include the novels *Matilda*, *My darling* (co-winner of the Australian/Vogel Literary Award), *JF was here* (winner of the New South Wales State Literary Award) and his latest, *Freedom highway*. His books have been published in the US, the UK and Germany. Nigel is Head of the Creative Writing program at Griffith University, Gold Coast.
