

“Look, it’s the face of your father”, she whispers to us. It’s good to feel her smile, but none of us have his Delft blue eyes.
Mrs. Wallinger is offering Mr. Kipling cakes and lemonade, so we make Mum follow her to the kitchen.

Of course Mum won’t have to look for us at all. A crowd of singing kids doesn’t go unnoticed.
In the city she has met her second husband, who is a roofing contractor, but we know she talks to our father in the middle of the night. She made us promise not to mention him to anyone, since most of the neighbours already own a copy of his face. Mr. and Mrs. Wallinger next door have their ceramic version of him on a shelf next to the digital radio and the DVD player.

One day the boys will go and look for our absent ceramic father and we will never see them again. Not in real life that is.
One of my sisters will visit a factory that makes tourist memorabilia. She will be convinced that the plastic figurines look just like our brothers.

My sisters think they are expected to do a lot of grooving. As women they will juggle kids, jobs and Wedgwood.

Solo dancers are usually the best dancers.
I am part of a group: the eight of us and Mum.

If we stay we will inherit a love of Wedgwood crockery. Throughout the year we will go to second-hand shops and markets and collect as much of it as we can. On a Sunday at the end of May all sisters will gather in the back of the family garden and throw cups and plates at the wall.

The Octuplet: Story of Our Lives

Babette Wagenvoort

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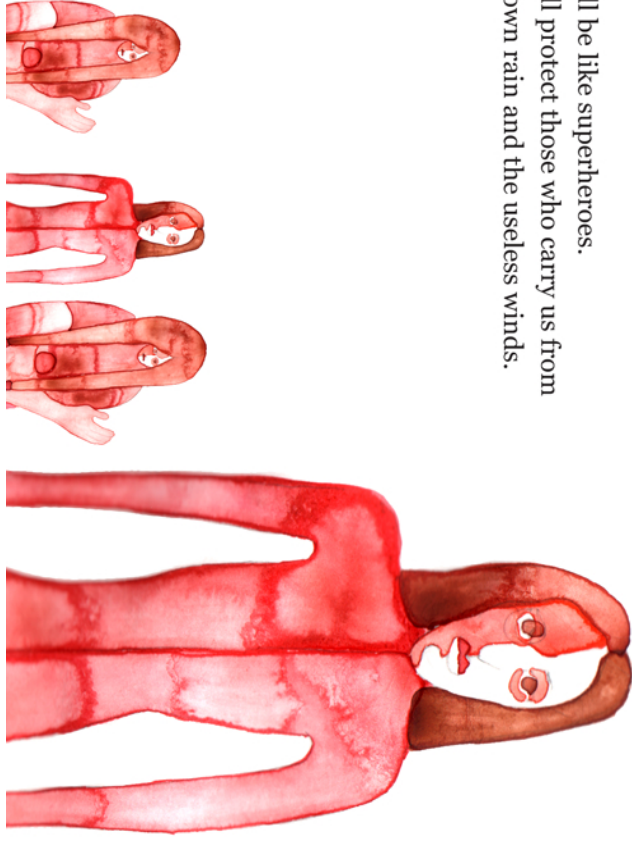
I guess it's my turn now.

There's applause and people cheering.

"Go for it!", they say, "give us everything you've got. We're absolutely confident that you'll put up a great show!"

Mum is watching television.

She did not want to get rid of us, but we are gone.



We will be like superheroes.
We will protect those who carry us from
the brown rain and the useless winds.

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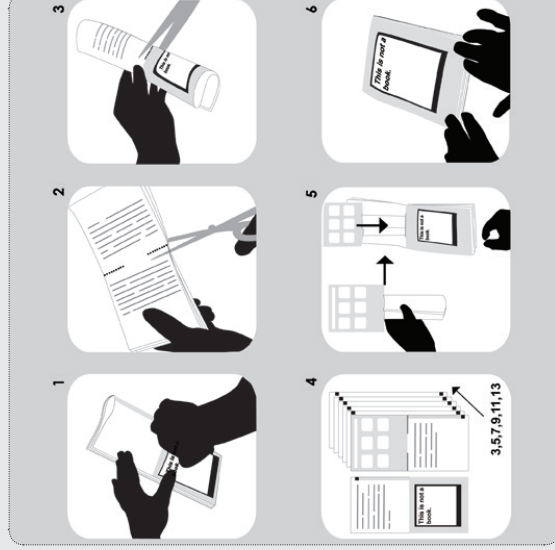
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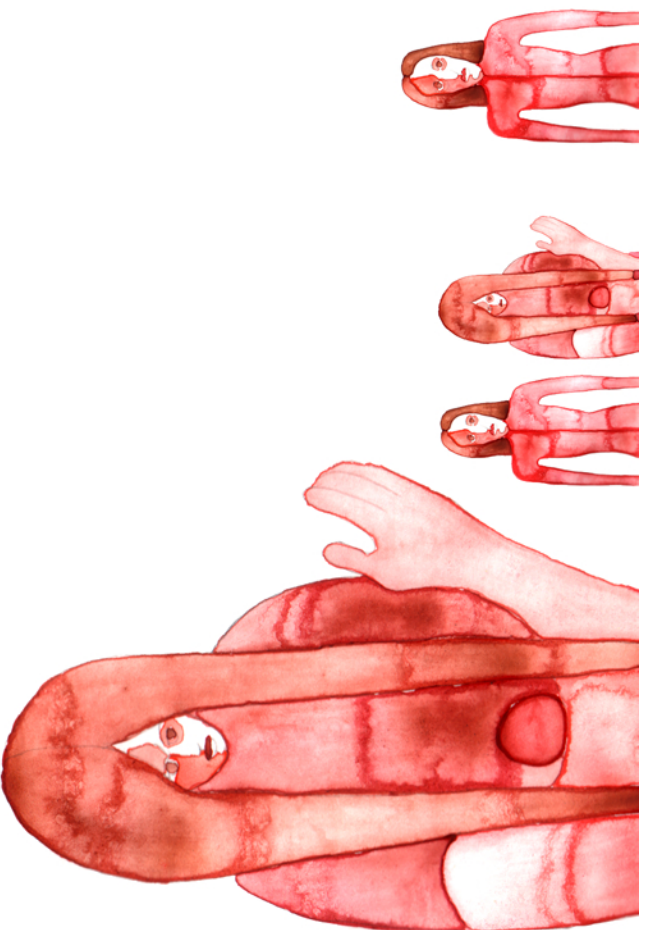


We were considered a risk, but our mother ignored the good doctor's advice. "Please abstain," he said. "or at least use some protection".

On a cloudy day in May everyone in the village will wear paper birthday crowns. They will eat cake and wear sparkly purple ballerina costumes with our names on. We will get a toy car, a Tinker Bell doll, a Transformer. We're holding hands in excitement. We will share everything.

We're inside her, but almost breathing on our own now: the quiet one; the smallest gasp; the big brotherly grunt; the caring sigh and protective gulp; the teacher, the most assertive and the one in charge.

We are one, we are eight, we are ready.



While we're here we hunt in packs and play near water. We roost by day and forage at night. We fly around between meals and hang upside down to rest. We act like animals because we need the warmth. You'd be surprised how many animals it takes to gain some security. We share everything.

To keep from starvation Mum has moved to the city. Our new winter coat has four credit card slots, roomy compartments and is machine washable. At the end of our road there is a big parking lot with caravans and strollers that she will use one day soon.

We will follow her everywhere. And if for some reason she's not home when we get back from school, we will become a search party of eight. Some of us will dance and sing while searching the streets and the neighbours' gardens. Some will run around in circles.



Soon Mum will thank me for the fantastic way my animal siblings have departed. I've been so incredibly supportive and kind.

Dance has come to be regarded as something one does for recreation whereas life might as well be a ritual training for battle. Sometimes to break the monotony partners move apart and dance alone. It still involves eight-fold concentration.

"Take up your weapons, my dear, and re-enact the moves of combat in the form of dance."
It might take a while for them to die.
"I thought we would be able to cross over straight away", my sister says, "but it looks like that's not the case."
I don't feel like sharing any more.

Doing something together is never as much fun as it seems. Somehow all our gatherings always end with at least one sister crying. Soon the ancient Mrs. Wallinger sticks her head over the wall and suggests we climb over for some lemonade. We share everything, of course.

I wonder what it would be like to do the things my sister does, but do them without her.

"Simply connect this pad to a television and enjoy dancing at home", a voice says while Mum is sitting down.

