

S O A R E

by Tale Næss

Characters:

Samuel – a UAV pilot

One - the narrator

Anna – a domestic help

Rakel – a security guard at a Holiday Inn Hotel

Ewo – an unemployed immigrant

PROLOGUE

One:

This is my voice.

I'm the one talking.

In the evenings. When it's dark. When nobody else is listening.

I am talking to the walls, to whoever. I say –

It's the garbage –

(The following lines can be distributed equally among the actors or performed as suggested.)

Anna:

It's the waste. Somebody has to deal with the waste.

One:

All the leftovers.

Anna:

The way they pile up.

One:

And the kids –

Anna:

Somebody has to take care of the kids.

In their beds,

One:

- in their rooms. Switching the world on and off, switching themselves on and off -

Beat

One:

I am the one talking. They say I repeat myself. That I keep saying the same things over and over again, that I keep on returning to the same subjects. That what I say will happen is what is going to happen. That will go on happening.

Samuel:

Yes –

Rakel:

I'm thinking about unspeakable things -

Anna:

Yes –

Samuel:

It's the echo in the hallways. The taste of earth in my mouth.

One:

Yes –

Anna:

All the stuff piling up.

Pause

One:

I'm the one talking – Can you hear me?

As you walk down the hall. As you pass by the children. As they sleep in their beds - your wife's face then. As you pass by the reception, Rakel. The shopping malls. On the bus, on the way home – the churchyards, the roundabouts. Faster now. Faster.

-

When you go to work. When you walk down the stairs. Walk up the stairs.

Prepare yourselves. As you finish that all that you think should be finished, all those necessary chores - In the kitchen, in the bunker, in the lobby.

Samuel:

Yes –

One:

And you take your turn. And the pilot on the previous shift signs out as you sign in, and you find your seat, and you try to focus. Try to get on with the job. Focus on the screen: The greyness of the landscape. The familiarity of the joystick.

Short pause

One:

- and you're the only one at the controls now.

Samuel:

-

One:

The flickering of the screen /

Samuel:

-

One:

- and the landscape you leave behind is a monotonous grey. And the landscape you are facing is a monotonous grey, and you are given the coordinates, and you check the communication satellites, and as you do all that - there is the constant sound from the fluorescent lights, a kind of hissing. The persistence of it sometimes overwhelming. The greyness of the landscape, the everydayness - those first minutes of the dayshift. And you try to make yourself comfortable and you know what you have to do.

They look at each other.

Samuel:

-

SILENCE

1.

Rakel:

I arrive at work. The screens are on, and my team takes over. We clock the cameras; - the cameras in the west wing, the cameras in the east wing, the ones covering the reception area, the corridors, the underground parking-lot.

We make sure that today's footage is safely stored on the hard disc, that all the cameras are operational.

Sometimes it's the dayshift that does your head in and sometimes it's the nightshift: The half-eaten burgers in the bin, doors opening and closing. An alarm going off somewhere, somebody lingering in the stairway for a little bit too long – but nothing really out of the ordinary - as you watch the cameras in the storage room, as you watch the cameras in the corridors on the third floor, as you watch row upon row of closed doors.

Closed doors and that which goes on behind them.

It's at nighttime. At four in the morning maybe, or five – as you sit there with your seventh cup of coffee - that's when your head starts playing games with you. Or you start playing games with your head - these not too healthy games. Just to keep yourself occupied. That's when your mind starts to wander – and you start guessing at things, you start guessing at what goes on inside the rooms, in the beds, in the showers. With the guests.

You see them there.

You imagine them there.

You transport yourself there – as if you through sheer willpower were able to place yourself there with them, in their rooms, in the privacy of their beds where the cameras cannot reach.

You are thinking of unspeakable things.

Short pause

You have observed something by chance maybe. Earlier in the day: An old man entering the lobby. His tattered suit and shabby shoes. How he pays in cash not once looking up during the transaction - And there is something about him. Something about the way he walks. Stooped. Something about his scrawny neck, and as the elevator closes behind him, you imagine him there on his knees, with his belt around his neck, with a pistol in his mouth.

Or by the bar: A young Asian girl. Dressed in tight jeans and a slinky white top. Barely seventeen. Or maybe just sixteen. Small-chested, her face like a child's - and the man beside her - heavy built. Older. Italian. Or Russian maybe. The way he takes her by the hand, how he pushes her into the elevator, along the corridors - and as soon as the door closes behind them, there is this image in your head. This scene unfolding in your mind and you cannot shake it: The girl on the floor. Her trousers around her legs as an object is forced into her. And then the sound she is making. A whimper. Or less than a whimper - and the hotel has more than a hundred rooms and more than a hundred cameras distributed everywhere, on all sixteen floors, in the basement, in the kitchen, in the elevators - but none of them can take you there. Nothing can take you there - and her face is close to the floor now. She is barely moving, barely breathing - and you know that it isn't real, that it is just an idea in your head as you survey the parking-lot, the main entrance, the reception, the stairway leading down to the reception, the stairway leading down to the kitchen - and as you do all that you still can't help yourself. You still can't stop yourself from thinking about her. You can't help but think that this could be it. This could be what's happening - This could be what goes on right now, on your watch, while you should be watching - And who could you call? Who should you call? Who could you call to stop it?

SILENCE

Rakel:

I'm thinking about unspeakable things –

One:

Yes.

Rakel:

About those who are asleep.

About those who cannot sleep.

Lights being turned off and lights being turned on.

The darkness.

A sudden sound.

A TV-set. A child crying. A woman crying.

One:

Yes.

SILENCE

2.

Anna:

I try not to bother myself with it. I try to take the day as it comes. To get my work done, get everything out of the way. To be there for the kids. Get some dinner organized. Get myself organized. Show up at the language course. Do my homework.

I try to practice.

The language.

I try to practice it as much as I can.

With the kids. With Jo sometimes, if she can be bothered. Whenever I get out of the house. When I take the dog for a walk, like. Or when I'm at the store buying groceries.

Samuel:

I mean –

Anna:

The same stuff, usually.

Samuel:

Why bother.

Anna:

- milk, tea, bread, juice. Some butter -

Samuel:

What's there to think about.

Anna:

- a lottery-ticket sometimes. Or a magazine.

I try to read, but most of the time I just look at the pictures –

Or when I pick up the mail in the morning. If I meet somebody. Or when I take the kids to school. I park the car and then I wait by the school gate and sometimes one of the parents stops for a chat.

I never smoke in the car.

Samuel:

I never smoke in the car.

Anna:

Jo can't stand the smell.

Samuel:

I smoke on the way home. Then I have a shower. We never talk about it.

My day.

Anna:

The parents. The people I work for. Samuel and Jo. They both hate the smell of cigarettes they say, so I might have a quick one by the school gate, or by the kiosk, or on the playground when I take the dog for a walk.

Samuel:

I mean - these things happen, she says –

Anna:

She says – these things happen, Samuel - Jo says. She can see it in his eyes and then they do not talk about it.

-

Samuel:

That's how it goes. I know that. It comes with the job.

It was my assignment. Mine.

Mitch started it, Smith took over but I ended it. It was my shift, my turn by the controls, my hand – so to say - on the trigger.

Having dinner. Knowing that.

Driving home. Stopping for a fag. Taking a shower not to smell - Knowing that.

That it was me. Thinking that she should know that too, Jo. That it was me. That I've done that.

No feeling of victory. No feeling of hate.

A beat

Anna:

I've been pondering over some words lately. Wanting to understand them better maybe. To get to know them better.

Samuel:

No feeling of hate.

No feeling of victory.

Anna:

Words like "mine". Words like "me". The m and the e. The sound of them -

Samuel:

-

Anna:

My duty.

Samuel:

No feeling of hate. And I let the dog out.

Short pause

Anna:

I can see them.

I can hear them talk.

I can hear Jo standing in the living-room.

I can see Samuel opening the door to the garden, letting the dog out.

I can see her standing in the kitchen counting the silverware. The cutlery. The forks and those big silver spoons. Making sure that it is all there. That nothing is missing.

Silence

Anna (despairingly to one of the other actors, to the audience, as if she has a need to defend herself):

No!

It wasn't me!

I didn't do it!

I haven't done anything!

It was all there when I left!

I was out walking the dog!

Why do you keep on asking me all those questions? When I was not there?

When I was out? When I did not take it? When I could not have taken it! I

haven't stolen anything!

SILENCE

3.

Rakel:

It was early spring.

April maybe. Just after Pesach – It was the nightshift. I was doing my round:
First the sauna, then the spa, then the swimmingpool.

Such a hot night.

I was back by the screens. The sound of the air-conditioning, faint steps in the
hallway –

One:

Did you see him?

Rakel:

No.

Or, I had a glimpse of him earlier on. Down by the reception.

One:

So he's back.

Rakel:

-

One:

Have you noticed? The way he takes off his gloves?

Rakel:

-

One:

The way he holds them.

Rakel:

-

He came at six. He always comes at six.

One:

So you waited for him?

Rakel:

-

One:

You saw him.

Rakel:

The dark coat across his arm.

One:

And then?

Rakel:

Nothing.

Beat

One:

He's here.

She saw him. She has started to notice things. Like when he arrives and at what time he leaves. What car he drives. A four-wheel drive. Dark blue. How he always parks in the same spot.

It's not that things he do, is it? It's how he does it. Considered. Precise. As if all every deed carries the same weight, is of the same vital importance. As if it is the last thing he is going to do: His hand on the doorknob. The tenseness of his shoulders.

Rakel:

-

One:

-

And then; a moment of hesitation, there, before he enters the room. Always the same room. Always the same floor. Everything with such certainty, and then – hesitation. As if he for a second, just for a brief moment, is about to give it up – all of it. The room, the night, what he came for. And you want him to turn around.

Rakel:

I want him to turn around.

One:

You want him to turn around so you can see his face, - But he never does. And then the moment is over. He enters. He closes the door and he's gone.

Short pause

Ewo:

Anna.

Look at me.

Anna - Turn around and look at me. Turn around so I can see you.

Silence

Rakel (to herself):

Turn around.

Turn around so I can see you.

Ewo:

Anna, turn around and look at me.

That's my girl.

Pause

One:

And you know that he will keep the lights on all through the night.

Samuel:

Yes.

Short pause

Samuel:

- and the next morning, when I'm ready to go home again –

Rakel:

- and the next morning when I pass by his room, he's already gone. And the girls are doing up his bed as I enter. Just to take a peek. Just a quick peek – and I notice that it hasn't been slept in.

The bed.

It's untouched.

Samuel:

-

Rakel:

The sheets snowy white and tightly stretched across the mattress.

And later I find out: No telephones. No pay-TV. No towels on the floor, no water in the shower.

One:

No sleep. No hunger -

Samuel:

- no hate. No victory.

One:

-

Rakel:

What does he do?

What does he do in there?

What does he do with himself all night?

Does he just sit there?

It's these thoughts, these ideas you keep getting – these not so healthy ideas about what goes on behind closed doors, with the guests. Where the cameras do not reach.

I see him there. At the edge of the bed. He's not moving. He has not moved for hours. He just sits there. As if he is afraid, afraid of touching anything, afraid of moving. To taint – to bruise - to leave a mark -

Short pause

Rakel:

That's how it started.

I saw him. And then I saw him again. One day I went to his room. I saw the bed all made up - and the sheets – And then I started expecting him. Looking for him. And as he came – always the same day of the month, allways at the same time, in the same car, the same coat, asking for the same room.

And I begun tracking through old recordings to see when all this started. How long he'd been comming here. I was looking for his car, his back, his face. And when I found it, I kept on playing it. Kept on playing it over and over again.

Pause

One:

I'm the one talking.

When I stop, you listen.

I say:

Anna:

It's the dog.

One:

-

Anna:

Somebody has to take care of the dog.

Rakel:

It's his neck.

Anna:

It's the kids.

Rakel:

All those closed doors -

Ewo:

It's this restlessness.

Rakel:

- and that which goes on behind them.

Samuel:

It's that which can't be undone.

Anna:

I am thinking about words like "mine".

Rakel:

I'm thinking about my hands, my thighs, the words I speak. The things I do.

Pause

Anna:

All that garbage that keeps piling up.

Pause

One:

I'm the one talking.

Ewo:

They say I keep repeating myself. That I'm going around in circles. That I
am hopeless.

Am I hopeless, Anna?

Anna:

Yes.

Ewo:

In what way am I hopeless?

Anna:

Just the way you are.

Ewo:

And how am I?

Anna:

You. You are mine.

My Ewo.

You are my Ewo and nobody can change that.

SILENCE

4.

Anna:

What are you doing in the kitchen?

Ewo!

Ewo:

-

Anna:

I told you not to go there. I told you not to come!

Ewo:

-

Anna

How did you get in anyway?

Did anybody see you?

Short beat

Ewo:

I was just getting something to eat. I –

Anna:

Who gave you the key?

Ewo:

I was hungry.

Anna:

I never gave you a key.

Ewo:

I was just getting something to eat –

Anna:

Close that!

Close that drawer, Ewo –

Short beat

Ewo:

Hey -

Anna:

I'm counting.

Ewo:

What are you doing?

Anna:

I'm counting the silverware.

Ewo:

Christ!

Anna:

I won't have you letting yourself in here. I want you to give me the key. I said Tuesday. I said that you could come on Tuesday – when they are out –

Ewo:

But they are out –

Anna:

I told you to call in advance –

Ewo:

I missed you.

Anna:

-

Let me see your pockets.

Ewo:

It's the truth. I missed you. I couldn't wait.

It's true, Anna – I wouldn't – I would never. You are the only friend I've got.

Anna:

Friend?

Friend?

You call yourself a friend? Do you know what they would do if they found you here?

Short pause

Anna:

Have you been talking to the kids?

Have you?

Ewo:

-

Short pause

Anna:

I am here at their mercy.

Do you know what that means?

Mercy, Ewo?

Do you know what kind of life this is?

Short pause

Anna:

You're laughing?

Ewo:

But Christ – What can they do?

Anna

-

Ewo:

Ok - they throw you out.

They send you out of the country – Is that the worst thing that could happen?

Is it?

Or –

Standing here – counting the cutlery?

Anna!

Anna:

-

Ewo:

You would just have to go back –just go back for a few months – then we would come up with something new.

I'm here for you.

Anna:

Not this time.

Just close that drawer!

Pause

Ewo:

Anna.

You are my Anna.

Pause

Anna:

No.

Not now.

Not here.

Not like that - Ewo.

Not this way.

They can hear us.

See us.

If they come down and see us.

The children -

They're coming –

I think they're here –

SILENCE

5.

One:

-

Anna:

I'm thinking about my father -

Ewo (as from another room or another place) :

Anna, what are you thinking about?

Anna:

He's at the top of the stairs. I'm hiding in the basement. Behind an old oil barrel, in a parking lot. I'm hiding in the bushes and he cannot find me.

A beat

Anna:

His face. Bottles of booze. A heap of cardboardboxes. Toxins spilling over on the pavement, the endless rows of trailers by the border crossings. Girls waiting for what? The smell of gasoline and vomit. My face pushed deep into a mattress. His sleep. His toxic intoxicated sleep all boozed up.

Pigs' blood thick and sticky on the frozen concrete. The slaughter. The slaughterhouse. Frozen berries hard as glass. My hands beating, digging, scraping at the mud. The language in me still and thick and dark like ink.

One:

What more?

Anna:

Neon maybe –

One:

And?

Anna:

Neon and fog. Drizzle. Drizzle resembling gas. Gas all lit up. The world lit up.
Everything lit up and Ewo and I in the middle of it. Me and him in the middle of
it. Alight. The streets, my teeth, my flesh, the bones inside my flesh, the softness
under my fingernails, -

One:

-

Anna:

- me and Ewo. Fleeing. Maybe running, splattering alight. Inside the city. Inside
the belly of a big city. Inside the belly of another big city. The rattling of our
bones, of our fluorescent skeletons dancing into the dark, hiding under the soiled
underbelly of a freight train, crossing another border, then another border and
then –

One:

- somewhere

Ewo (as from another room or space) :

You can rest now Anna.

Anna:

- somewhere on the outskirts of northern Europe -

Ewo:

You are safe with me.

Look at her little face.

Look at it! Nothing like it in the world – but my Anna. My Anna all lit up –

Anna:

- by the lanterns of the factory, by the firecrackers, by a New Year's Eve I've almost
forgot about.

One:

Just like that.

Anna:

Yes - until the light itself dances and dances and dances - like a dead man in the dark.

Short pause

SILENCE

6.

Samuel:

I mean – what's there to think about?

These things happen. This is what we have been trained for.

It could have happened to anybody - Simon or Smith or – any of the guys - But it was me. I was the one sitting there.

Short pause

Samuel:

I was the one out there.

In my seat.

Watching: Cars on the roads, children on their way to school, the mountains, the mountain-ranges, some barren trees, stretches of sand, a village – Just me manouring it as it moves, glides forward, eating miles. Wings twice as wide as a bomber -

One:

And you know where you are headed?

Samuel:

Yes.

One:

There is no need to check your orders.

Samuel:

No.

One:

You have been given the coordinates.

Samuel:

Yes.

One:

You've updated the log –

Samuel:

-

One:

And you merge with the screen, and the sound of the instruments are barely noticeable now, and your vision narrows as the room disappears, as the sound of the instruments tune out, and you just keep on going, almost becoming one with the thing out there. The Reaper. Eleven million dollars' worth of it.

Short pause

Samuel:

I am the pilot.

One:

It has no pilot.

Samuel:

I'm the one flying it.

One:

You're not flying anything. You're in your seat. You're in the bunker.

Samuel -

Samuel:

Hsssh.

I am the one flying the damned thing -

One:

-

Short pause

One:

- and your hand is on the joystick and you're mind is out there now, under that merciless sky. That's where your mind is. You're body is in the bunker. It's your mind that ties it all together: You, the mission, the thing out there. All fully armed. All fully loaded. All loaded up and ready to go.

Samuel:

Yes –

Anna:

I'm thinking about unspeakable things –

SILENCE

A beat

Samuel:

Nothing happens by accident.

The target is given. I know that. You're locked on it. It is all under control, I had it under control. The Sidewinders ready, the Hellfires -

One:

You check the timer: /

Samuel:

04:26.

One:

- You know the procedure. /

Samuel:

04:28.

One:

- prepare for the attack: /

Samuel:

04.32.

Short pause

One:

- and then: It all happens at once - the plume of dust. The house it hides, the roof collapsing. A rain of stones, the stones raining, the dust settling. You are looking straight down at it. From the belly of the drone – this gigantic drone – straight down, as if from a cloud - and you see a herd of goats skipping, skirting down the hill and you had no idea that there were so many people in there –

A beat

Samuel:

I had no idea they were so many –

One:

A whole family. Seven children.

Samuel:

-

And there is no sound -

One:

- and once more it strikes you – that lack of sound. You see it as it happens: the plume of smoke, the rain of rocks, the goats running, skidding, skirting down the slope, down into the valley and across the fields before they settling hesitantly - but no sound. Then the smoke lifts, the mission is over, the scene is calm again.

That's it: The goats grazing. The roof collapsing – or in the opposite order as you record it, store it on the hard-disc. Document it. It's documentation. Playback-time. Samuel. Playback-time ...

SILENCE

Samuel:

-

One:

-

They look at each other.

Samuel:

Say it.

Say it!

Tell it to me!

Tell it to me like it is. Tell me what really happened!

Tell me what's happening out there!

SILENCE

Rakel:

Playback-time.

I go through the database. I run through the recordings – just one more time, I say to myself. Just one more time. I am looking for his face - and they ask me – what do you want them for? Those old recordings.

Do you keep them?

The tapes?

Why?

You know that you're not allowed to keep them?

You know that you are not allowed to take them outside the building?

And I say – I'm not taking them anywhere.

And they say – So what is it – that you keep looking at?

Is that somebody you know?

(Rakel, as if talking to herself) So what is it - you keep looking at?

Is that somebody you know?

Pause

Samuel:

And I leave the bunker. And I pick up the car and drive home. And they cover the bodies. The children, seven of them. Small bodies under the sheets -

Jo's still at work. I have a smoke in the garden. Anna has left some cold meat on the stove and a jar of gherkins. She pickles them herself.

There is a note under my plate. It's from Jo. It's Tuesday. She always works late on Tuesdays.

There is mustard there too and some dark rye bread.

I settle by the window. I'm starving. All of a sudden I'm just extremely hungry. And I walk over to the stove and I help myself to some meat and then I help myself to some more.

I bring the jar of gherkins with me and I help myself to one gherkin. And then another.

I'm thirsty. I need a beer. I suck the salty juices off my fingers. Sling a beer down. I keep on eating. Keep on drinking. Straight from the bottle and it has no weight. I watch how the bubbles shoot, shoot through the brown beer from the bottom of the bottle. Shooting their way through the dark malty liquid like tiny, sparkling planets - and as I drink, as I eat, as I sit there by the kitchen window, in my house, looking at my garden, my car, my gate with its high-tech alarm-system, - I'm still out there. I'm not here, not really. I am out there - doing it – It's happening – and it continues to happen. It keeps on happening-

7.

Anna (walking down the stairs, tying the the belt on her morning gown):

You're home?

Samuel:

-

Anna:

You're up?

You found the meat?

I just came to check the door. I thought I heard something. The alarm isn't on -

Samuels sits. He is holding on to the glass of gherkins. He looks at it. It's almost empty.

Samuel:

I seem to have eaten all of them.

Anna:

Please/help yourself/velbekomme – (or some phrase in her own language)

He hands her the glass and she puts the lid back on.

Samuel:

That robe –

Anna:

-

It's Jo's. It's Johanna's?

Samuel:

And the slippers –

Anna:

She gave them to me.

Samuel:

-

She opens the lid. Takes a gherkin.

Anna:

Jo said –

Samuel:

They're really tasty – those gherkins –

Anna:

A bit too sweet –

Samuel:

No - they are really nice.

Anna:

Too salty.

Samuel:

Perfect.

Anna:

She's working late.

Samuel:

Yes – she left note under my plate.

Really tasty.

Anna (in a low voice):

Thanks.

Short pause

One:

And you do not want to have sex with her.

Anna:

You mustn't think that I-

Samuel:

I don't think anything.

What do you think?

What do you think - Anna?

SILENCE

8.

Rakel:

The back of his head. His neck. His shirt, his hair.

In the reception, by the entrance, at the bar.

It's not that I am stalking him. I'm just keeping an eye out. Am I not?

One:

-

Short pause

Samuel:

Everything happens by accident.

Rakel:

It's that noise in my head. A kind of white noise. Filling it.

Samuel:

I'm here and at the same time I'm out there. Hovering over another continent.

It would take me days to get there, still that's where I am. Still that's what I'm doing. I'm left at the scene, I'm circling the grey landscape, I'm counting the bodies. You never see the faces you know. They have no faces. They are just silhouettes - The plume of smoke, the roof collapsing, the goats hurdling down the slope –

One:

There he is.

On the 7th floor. In his room.

It's Samuel.

Sitting there on the bed. Unable to move.

Rakel:

And it's late at night and your mind starts to wander and you see him there, in the room he has rented for the night. Always just for one night.

He sits on the edge of the bed as if waiting for something, waiting for something to happen. Waiting for someone to come.

A beat

Samuel starts to shout. He can say this, or he can say something else:

Samuel:

But I wasn't there!

I wasn't there!

I was here!

I never left. I did not mean to! I didn't –

God! Christ! Fuck! I see them! I see them all the time. I can't see their faces. I want to see their faces! Why can't I see their faces! Turn around! For fuck's sake turn around! Turn around so I can see you!

SILENCE

9.

Quiet

Anna:

I don't know –

Sometimes it feels as if I might grow old in this place.

Like really, really old –

Ewo –

Ewo:

Mhm?

Anna:

Like really, really old. Do you want that? To become like really, really old?

Beat

Anna:

It's lovely up here.

Isn't it lovely?

Lovely to get out of that house.

Don't you think?

Where did you get that car?

Ewo:

It's a friend of mine's.

Short pause

Anna:

Do you remember when we were kids?

Sitting in Jano's basement while the others were up to no good?

His parents were always away.

He had that stick, remember?

We used to just hang out. Watching TV, chucking ice cubes at each other.

We weren't ganging up on them or anything but you wanted that stick, remember? Jano's stick.

What did you want that stick for?

Beat

Ewo:

Take off your blouse.

Anna:

What?

Ewo:

Take it off.

Beat

Anna:

You had this torch.

Ewo:

Nobody can see us.

Anna:

It was always dark down there.

Ewo:

Do it Anna.

Remember?

Anna:

And you refused to use it. The torch.

Ewo:

Take it off.

Short pause

Ewo:

Take it off.

Anna:

Now?

(The following lines can be shared between Ewo and Anna or distributed among all the actors.)

- Nobody can see us.
- It was so dark down there.
- You had this torch.
- Take it off, Anna.
- Remember?
- You refused to light it?
- Just do it. Do it for me Anna.
- Take it off.

Beat

Anna:

Everything has a beginning.

Samuel:

Nothing happens by accident.

Rakel:

I'm thinking about unspeakable things.

Ewo:

There is no way –

Anna:

There is no way –

Samuel:

There is no way I can go back there.

(The following lines is to be distributed between all the actors.)

- Remember?
- That -
- you wanted it.
- You took it from him.
- Just pitch dark.
- Take it off, Anna.
- Do it.
- Do it now.
- Do it because I tell you to.

SILENCE

10.

Rakel:

There are sixteen floors in this hotel. Fourteen above ground and two underground.

Here, where I am sitting - Here in this control room, I have eleven floors above me.

If this place should tumble. If this place should topple and fall, all eleven floors would land on top of me. Eleven floors, fifty-five rooms in each, the rooftop bar, the outdoor swimming-pool, the gym, the sauna, the sushi restaurant on the 5th floor, the staff, the hired staff, and the guests. Hundreds of them. Maybe a thousand late at night or on a good weekend.

Pause

Samuel:

Everything happens for a reason.

Anna:

I salted the gherkins. I pickled them in a jar like my mother used to do.

He had been working late.

I'd gotten some cold meat out of the fridge for him.

I often did that. When he was working late. Or came home late. Some Tuesdays he didn't come home at all.

I didn't wait up for him. The kids were fast asleep when I heard a noise. I found him by the kitchen window. He was about to finish them off. The gherkins. The whole jar. He had that look on his face. I've seen that look before.

Famished -

Anna comes down the stairs while tying the belt on an old dressing-gown.

Anna:

You're home?

I thought I heard something?

So this is where you are?

Samuel:

-

Anna:

Did you turn on the alarm?

He stops eating.

Samuel:

I seem to be eating all of them. So sorry – I think I was about to finish them off.

She turns away from him, putting the lid back on the jar.

Anna:

He asks me about the robe –

(to Samuel) It's Jo's.

Samuel:

And the slippers?

Anna:

She gave them to me.

She unscrews the lid and starts chewing at a gurkin.

Anna:

She said –

She's working late.

She's -

Short pause

Anna:

I'll get the alarm going.

Samuel:

There is no need.

If anybody tries to get in – We'll just put the dogs on them.

Anna:

I think we should -

Samuel:

Wait.

Wait. Stay.

Anna:

-

Samuel:

-

Let's just talk.

Stay – Let's just talk – just talk for a moment.

Short beat

Samuel:

How long have you been with us?

Anna:

-

Samuel:

Here.

Anna:

One and a half year.

Samuel:

That's nice.

That's really great.

And before – what did you do before?

Anna:

-

Samuel:

That's not a complicated question is it?

What's the problem? I just asked you the simplest of questions - What did you do before you came to us? Did you have a good time – Christ! I'm just trying to make conversation here - Can't you just tell me what you did before?

Anna:

-

Samuel:

But for fuck's sake? What's wrong with you? Talk to me!

Are you just going to stand there?

Anna:

I just think we should –

Samuel:

What!

What is it that we should?

What is it that – Don't just stand there!

Anna (in a low voice):

I should really get that alarm going.

Pause

One:

And he stops her.

And she stands there.

And he walks over to the refrigerator. And he takes out another bottle of beer.

And he drinks it.

Or he does not drink it.

And he just stands there.

And she just stands there.

And he lifts the bottle and then he throws it, and the bottle hits the wall.

And he grabs another bottle. And he smashes it against the wall.

And he grabs another.

And it smashes against the wall like the last one.

And then another.

Anna starts picking up the broken glass.

Samuel:

Anna.

Anna:

-

Samuel:

I'm sorry.

Anna:

-

Samuel:

Stop that.

Get up.

Get up!

She gets up.

Samuel:

Come here.

Sit down.

Just sit down. Let's talk.

Let's just talk for a little.

It's none of my business. I know. What you did before. It's none of my
business -

Anna:

-

Samuel:

And your parents?

What did they do for a living?

Anna:

They had goats.

Short pause

And another

One:

And Jo comes home.

And you feel like making love to her.

And you try to make love to her, but you are not able to. And she says:

Samuel:

I know where you've been.

I know what you're up to. Why you keep on disappearing like that. You must be aware of the fact that I -

One:

And you say:

Samuel:

You mustn't believe that - I haven't -

One:

And -

Samuel:

You must know that I never would -

One:

And she says:

Samuel:

I don't believe anything.

One:

And she says:

Samuel:

What do you believe in?

What do you believe in Samuel?

She says - Samuel.

She says - Samuel

- Samuel.

Samuel

Samuel

Samuel

Samuel

SILENCE

11.

Rakel:

It's nighttime. I'm just sitting here. Waiting. That's when your mind starts to wander – That's when you start playing this game, this not too healthy game – to pass the time mostly – trying to guess what goes on, try to imagine what could be going on behind those closed doors, inside the rooms where the cameras cannot reach.

I imagine him there.

On the bed.

By the window. On the floor. Straight out like a corpse. Still wearing his suit, his gloves, his shoes. Still breathing. Just lying there. Staring at the ceiling.

He has a ring in his pocket. It's a wedding ring. He picks it up, puts it in his mouth. Puts it on his finger. Looks at it. Hides it in his fist. Clenches it. And afterwards.

An hour later maybe - In the bathroom - The water filling the sink, filling it to the brim, pouring over the edges, onto the floor, onto his feet, into the room, soaking the carpets, wetting the skirting-boards, the wallpaper, and it continues to flow –

One:

Yes.

Rakel:

- and there is nobody there to see it.

And there is nobody there to stop it.

And there is nobody there to talk to, there is nothing can do about it.

One:

No.

They look at each other.

Rakel:

It's just a thought but it's there and I can't stop thinking about it.

I want to be there with him.

I want to go up to his room and be there.

To stand with him in the wall of water.

In my mind it's there. Do you get it. It's as real as anything -

You're being silly, I say to myself. This is silly. This indecisiveness – and then he leaves, he's gone. And I go up to his room again. I talk to the maids again and they let me in. And the room is dry. Everything in place. Untouched. The sheets tightly stretched across the mattress, and I put my hand on it. On the coolness of the sheets. And I place myself in the chair where he might have been sitting. And I lie on the floor where he may have been lying. And I search for his warmth there, but I cannot find it.

No waste in the bin.

The room's empty in an lurid way, as if nobody had ever been there: The bed, the nightstand, the navy-blue wall-to-wall carpet woolly and dry against my hand.

Pause

A beat

Anna:

It's the dirt.

It's the filth.

It's the filth, or it was the filth –

Somebody has to get rid of it.

The way it mounts up.

Short pause

Anna:

It's the living room.

The furniture.

Broken glass all over the kitchen floor.

Splatters of beer running down the kitschenwalls - and I fill the bucket with hot water, and I open the cupboards and I look at all the different types of detergents. Bottles of polish, bottles of soap and bleach. Not very different from those we had at home. They are even in the same place. There. Under the sink. All filling the same purpose, the same smell, just different labels: one for the sink, one for the stove, one for the tiles in the bathroom.

Pause

One:

I am the one talking.

Can you hear me?

Can you hear me talking to you? At night time. When it's quiet. When it's dark.

I talk to the will in you – Samuel - standing there, watching the beer as it trickles down the walls. Watching Anna as she bends down, as she cleans up after you.

Watching Jo beside you in your big bed as you push your hand between her thighs, as you kiss the kids before they go to school, as you drive to work. As you stop. As you stand there with the engine running. As you leave it. The car. As you walk into a field purposelessly. As you take a cigarette. As you forget to come home, to shower. As you forget to get up. What's there to get up for? As you check in at a big hotel downtown, and it's so hot and it's not the first time you are there. It's not the first time you check yourself in. And you lose yourself in the corridors, in the sheer space of the place.

Always the same hotel.

Always the same room, the same insomnia. The night guard passing by your door. His or her steps as he or she stops, stands there. Listening maybe. Stands there outside your door -

Short pause

One:

You wait.

You check your watch –

Samuel:

It is -

One:

04:26.

Samuel:

04:28.

One:

04.32.

(Continued by One or this part could be distributed among One, Anna, Samuel and/or Raket)

The roof collapsing, the stones cascading, the dust settling, a herd of goats skidding, leaping, hurdling down the hill -

It never ends.

This is how it's going to be.

This is how it is.

Short pause

One:

Samuel –

Turn around. Turn around and look at me.

A beat

In the kitchen with Anna.

Samuel:

Stand up, Anna!

Long pause

One:

But she does not listen and she does not answer and that's when the children open the kitschendoor and you realize that you have been shouting. That you have been shouting out her name. That you have been shouting for a while - because the eldest, your four year-old daughter keeps covering her ears with her hands and you realize that you are shaking, that you are shaking her – and you let go of her, you let go of Anna and you look at your daughter and you look at her and you can see a streak of blood under her nose and a spike of bottle-coloured glass stuck in her cheek -

A beat

Ewo:

What is it?

What's on your mind, Anna?

Anna:

I slept with the goats you know. Sometimes. I slept there. With the animals.

One:

What's on your mind Anna?

Ewo:

That's what's on her mind as he takes the children out of the room, as she wipes the beer off the walls, as she wipes the blood off her cheek. She is thinking about the goats. The smell of them. The warmth of their bodies. The yellow gleam of their eyes. The warmth of the goat's milk fresh in her mouth on grey, icy, Ukrainian mornings.

Short silence

Samuel:

I'm crossing the lawn.

I can't find my shoes?

My wife is watching from the bedroom window.

Jo's there. Watching me.

I've taken off our wedding ring. It's in my mouth.

I'm light as a feather.

Ewo:

It's Tuesday.

It's our day.

They shouldn't be home.

The cars in the drive. The alarm's off.

I can see her through the kitchen window. Crouching down. Rubbing the walls, wiping them down, and there is a hatred in me. Or anger. I do not know which –

Turn around, Anna.

Turn around and look at me!

A beat

One:

And Ewo pushes his face against the window as Anna keeps wiping the the wall.

Sitting on the floor all covered in broken glass.

A beat

One:

He is leaning his forehead against the window.

Samuel is barefoot in the grass.

A short beat

Samuel:

What are you doing here?

Ewo:

What I'm doing here?

Samuel:

Sit.

Don't move.

Ewo:

Hey!

Wait!

Wait.

I can explain.

I'm a friend of Anna's.

She knows me.

She asked me to come. You can just talk to her.

Why are you looking at me?

Why are you looking at me like that?

Stop looking at me like that!

Samuel:

-

Ewo:

I had no idea you were at home –

I - Ok – just do it.

Go ahead.

Just turn the dogs on me.

-

SILENCE

Rakel:

It's at night. That's when you get these ideas. These silly ideas in your head - and you turn yourself into an eye. You become this eye. You move about, up and down the corridors, you hover over the bar - enter the rooms, sit by the beds and nobody can see you.

It's Tuesday.

Past midnight.

Room 703 is dark.

I'm waiting.

He should have been here by now.

Where is he? Why isn't he here?

Samuel is watching Anna. Ewo is watching Anna.

Samuel:

Look at her.

Look at her.

How long do you think she'll go on doing that?

Ewo:

-

Samuel:

She'll just keep on doing it, won't she? She'll just keep on wiping those walls for as long as it takes. She'll keep on going at it until everything is back in its place.

Until there isn't a trace, until it's all cleaned up.

Pause

One:

Ewo gets up. Anna's hair keeps falling into her eyes, hair dark at the roots.

Samuel has no shoes on.

He's just out there walking. The wedding ring is in his mouth, at the tip of his tongue. He is about to swallow it. He stops. He is talking to Ewo. This is his

garden. His house. He is considering letting the dogs loose on him. He stands there. All sober now. Smelling of gherkins and beer.

13.

One:

Samuel crosses the lawn.

Jo closes the curtains.

Anna wraps the broken glass in an old newspaper.

Ewo gets up.

The car is in the drive. The engine is on. The key is in the ignition.

Ewo's by the veranda door. He opens it.

Anna:

What are you doing here?

One:

He does not answer. He says:

Ewo:

You are my Anna. You're my girl and nothing is going to change that.

Short pause

One:

Samuel crosses the lawn. He gets into the car. He's not wearing any shoes.

Anna turns off the lights in the kitchen. Ewo is left in the dark. Samuel drives through the garden gate. He leaves the house behind him as Rakel pours herself another cup of coffee, as she starts talking quietly to herself, and the hotel is a huge body harboring a thousand mouths and a thousand eyes. Harboring sinks and doors and locks -

And Samuel drives through the suburbs, into the city. He parks the car in the hotel basement. He enters the reception. Still barefoot, his shirt all wet from beer and sweat. He takes the elevator. He passes the camera to the left, he enters the camera to the right, and Rakel is looking at her hand. At the cup. At

her coffee. She does not see him. His face grimy, the coffee black as he reaches for his wallet to check himself in.

Ewo:

They say that I repeat myself. That I am moving in circles. That I am
hopeless?

Am I?

Am I Anna?

Anna:

Yes.

Owe:

In what way am I hopeless?

Anna:

The way you are.

What you are like.

Owe:

And what am I like?

Anna:

You're Ewo.

You're my Ewo and nothing's going to change that.

SILENCE

One:

The corridor outside room 703 is empty.

He's in the elevator. He's in the stairway.

He takes the fire exit. He's crouching down in an ironing cupboard.

It's too hot in there, isn't it?

It's only you there, isn't it Samuel?

Beat

One:

And Rakel finishes her coffee. She reaches for her bag. It's time to go home. He's not coming. It's time to take the subway. It's raining. She takes the stairs. She enters her flat without turning on the lights. Gets undressed in the dark. Among her belongings, among all that which belongs to her.

She keeps her socks on. That's all. Stands there in the light from the aquarium. She does not turn the radio on. She does not turn on the TV. She stands in the light from the refrigerator. She is eating a hot dog straight from the can. She does not bother to heat it. She is leaning her forehead against the icebox. Her eye is translucent. It's a gateway and the gateway needs no crossing. It's as wide open as Rakel herself.

SILENCE

Rakel:

I'm in my room. I'm in the living room. Surrounded by my belongings, my stuff. I'm there in the dark. I'm standing in the dark flipping through a magazine and I can feel it – He's –

One:

I'm so close now.

I'm right behind you.

Rakel:

And I am trying not to notice. It's nothing. I'm just being silly.

One:

And she is trying not to notice. Not to be silly.

Rakel:

I'm in the kitchen. I open the refrigerator.

One:

A half empty cup of yoghurt on the top shelf. A can of coffee beans, a piece of cheese, old and yellow and stale.

Rakel:

I can feel him – there. It -

One:

I'm closing in on her and she knows it. She awaits it. I'm here. I'm in her room. Right now I'm nowhere else. I touch her. I reach out and I touch her back and it is hard as glass.

It's silent.

All is silent for a little longer.

Pause

One:

I'm the one talking. Listen -

Not a sound, - and Anna looks at Ewo, and Ewo says:

Ewo:

I promise you, Anna.

I promise you.

I'll take you away from this place. I'll take you somewhere great.

Short pause

One:

It's dawn.

This night will soon be over.

The live screens light up as Rakel is back behind the screens.

Rakel:

I can't sleep. I'm facing the screens. I can envision it all. Every room. Everyone asleep in their rooms – but he isn't there. He must be somewhere. In the

elevator, by the stairs, he is hiding in the ironing cupboard. He's on his back now
– His hands stretched out. He resembles a beggar, a crucified, himself.

There is blood on his shirt – he is not wearing any. He makes me think of a big
dog. A big bleeding dog. A horse left out in the rain.

That's what I see. That's what I make myself imagine.

I can see him there.

I see –

One:

But the room is still empty.

Room 703. Locked. She's -

Rakel:

- looking -

One:

She -

Rakel:

- says

One:

I.

Short pause

Rakel:

He's pacing the room -

He's wearing a suit -

He's undressed -

He's waiting for somebody. The suitcase on his bed is full off stuff, it's empty. By the
door a shotgun. On the nightstand a bible.

One:

She glances from one camera to the other. His room is still empty.

Rakel:

He's nowhere -

He's not to be seen -

He should have been there.

One:

A chill runs down her spine. A nibbling little flame – and she starts turning off the cameras. Camera one, camera six, camera hundred and eighteen. And Anna says:

Anna:

Never mind.

Never mind, Ewo.

One:

And the traffic keeps building up in the roundabout, bumper to bumper down the high street as Rakel turns off camera two hundred and twelve and two hundred and fourteen.

Rakel:

Yes.

Ewo:

Did you see his face?

Did you get to see his face?

Anna:

Whose face?

Ewo:

That guy you are working for? As he left?

Why was he talking about goats?

One:

While Rakel turns off camera three hundred and twenty one and three hundred and twenty-four.

Anna:

Yes.

Ewo:

He must have been drunk.

Anna:

I don't think so.

Ewo:

He had no shoes on -

One:

Rakel waits.

She watches the darkened screens.

It is soon dawn. Yet another hour before the next shift. She's the only one there.

She takes out her keys.

She's ready to leave it all behind.

Ewo:

I'll take you somewhere nice. You'll see.

We have this car now.

I borrowed it from a friend. It's a good car. Fast. It will get us places.

Beat

One:

She opens the door.

She's inside.

This is room 703.

I'm there with her.

It smells of - nothing.

Dust and detergent.

SILENCE

Rakel:

Yes.

One:

She sits down on the bed.

Rakel:

Yes.

One:

I'm there beside you.

Rakel:

-

One:

You can feel my warmth.

Rakel:

No.

One:

But you know I'm here?

SILENCE

Rakel:

-

Short pause

One:

What do you see?

Rakel:

The bathroom door's ajar. A shower, a toilet, a towel by the sink. Grey tiles.

One:

What do you see?

Rakel:

The TV set. The window. The view of the park.

One:

And you walk over to the window?

Rakel:

Yes.

One:

And we are standing there?

Rakel:

The lawn scorched by the sun. The park desolate. The grass covered by dead leaves and it hasn't rained for days, months maybe.

One:

And wish that it could rain –

Rakel:

How I wish it would rain again.

One:

What else?

Rakel:

The newspaper-stand on the corner is about to open. A woman approaches the hotel. She is pushing a pram. She's followed by two small children.

One:

And you turn away.

And you turn on the television set.

There is no signal.

All the screens in the world are lit up, and this one has no signal.

The sheets cold and dead beneath your hands.

Rakel:

And then?

One:

He's not here.

This is not where you will find him.

You get that now - And you leave the room. You close the door behind you and then you see him. Standing. At the end of the corridor. Barefoot. Gloves on his hands. Beer spilled all over his pale blue shirt.

Samuel:

-

Rakel:

-

Is this your room?

Samuel:

-

Rakel:

Can't you find it? Your room?

It's this one, isn't it?

Samuel:

-

Rakel:

Isn't this were you stay?

Samuel:

-

Rakel:

Are you staying in this hotel?

If you're not staying in this hotel you shouldn't –

Samuel:

I usually –

Rakel:

- then I might have to call /

Samuel:

I can't -

Rakel:

Off course you can – but if you are not a guest here then I am afraid I have to –
You'll have to leave the premises –

Or you need to book a room –

Have you booked a room?

Samuel:

I've left my wallet.

Rakel:

-

Samuel:

I have no money. I didn't take my card – I can't. I can't do it. I can't be – I can't do
my job anymore. – I can't do this – I need to see their faces - There is no way I
can do this, and my kids – There is just no way – No way I could –

Beat

Rakel:

Ok.

I hear you.

Wait.

One:

And I hold his arm as if he was a child.

And the door to room703 closes behind them and Anna says:

Anna:

Ewo, Ewo, Ewo, Ewo – where are you taking me?

One:

And the light is dim. In the hallway there is a sound. A sharp bang, maybe. Or a clutter. As if something just toppled over inside one of the rooms. As if someone just fell to the floor. And then a hush of welling water. As if the room was suddenly afloat with it. As if the room was about to break at its seams. And the television is on. All of a sudden, as if in a flash, all the hotel's hundreds, maybe thousands of television-sets light up, and Rakel holds Samuel by the arm.

Rakel:

I am holding his arm as if he was a child.

Samuel:

Rakel.

One:

She is holding his arm as if he was a child

Rakel:

Samuel –

Pause

One (as if starting all over) :

Samuel - the watch he wears, the whiteness of his underarms, the shirt, his socks, his back – not especially broad, not especially muscular. Those narrow hips, the inside of his knees, the way he bends down to pick up a newspaper, the way he undresses – We know it by now. These movements. The way he takes off his shirt – not fast – not slow. There beside her. Crying maybe. Or totally still, lying on his back like a dead person.

The way he never turns around to look at me.

Rakel:

Turn around and look at me.

One:

- not until it's over.

Beat

Samuel:

That is what I do.

Pause

Rakel:

And I can't help pondering upon words like "mine". On words like "me". On expressions like "my duty", "my responsibility".

Samuel:

-

Beat

Anna:

Who's looking after the children?

When I'm gone – who's going to look after the children?

One:

And I'm in the car with her and I'm holding her arm like a child.

Beat

One:

Jo's with the children.

She' is outside the hotel.

She is at the hotel. The kids are playing in the lobby.

And Anna and Ewo are going on a drive. They are stopping for a bite to eat. At a

diner high up in the hills Anna pushes her plate across the table.

Ewo is outside fueling up the car. I'm there with her as Anna says:

Anna:

Did you say something?

Rakel:

No.

Anna:

I thought you said something?

Ewo:

Just getting a coffee and a bun. You?

One:

And Ewo takes a bite of her pancake and the sun is rising now – low and orange as it stretches lazily across the tarmac, across the slick black bonnet of the car and in one brief second everything is alight, the bumpers, the rearview mirror, the headlights, the horizon, Anna's face flaring up, silvery and bright - and Anna says:

Anna:

Isn't it great here?

Wasn't it great to get out of that house?

Tell me again - where did you get that car?

Ewo:

-

Anna:

How fast is it?

Ewo:

210 – 220 –

Anna:

Not faster?

Owe:

250 maybe?

One:

And I know they cannot stay there.

Anna:

I don't know -

One:

You cannot stay here.

Anna:

I don't know -

Ewo:

-

One:

Time's running out.

And I'm sitting right beside them.

Anna:

I don't know -

Ewo:

-

Anna:

I think we should leave.

Ewo:

Its'fine.

It's fine, Anna – I promise. We're leaving in a minute.

Anna:

I think we should be off now.

Ewo:

I'll just finish my coffee.

Short pause

One:

Anna and Ewo.

Jo and her children.

Samuel and Rakel.

A sixteen-story hotell.

(The following passage can be divided between the characters as suggested or be shared randomly among them. It can also be performed partly or as a whole choir sequence.)

One:

This is what we believe in

This is what we will continue to believe in.

This is what we got.

Rakel turns off the tv.

Samuel rests his head in her lap - and down in the basement water starts seeping through the foundation, forcing its way through the sediments, trickling through the insulation, breaking through the vents, the sockets, the outskirts of pipes, along the cracks and the skirting boards.

Just dampness at first.

Soaking everything.

A feeling. Just a feeling - Then it's there.

The water, the force of it, the pressure of it. As it breaks through, pours in, seeping into the carpets, the linen, the dirty sheets in the wicker baskets in the washroom, the grey heaps of laundry on the basement floor. And it keeps on coming. And it keeps on rising. Up the staircase, covering stacks of chairs and discarded shelves at the backside of the parking-lot. Washing with it light-bulbs

and radios and dvd-players. Wine-lists and napkin holders and old menus. Rising up along the basement walls and spilling onto the ground floor, soaking the soft brown carpet in the hotel lobby, pushing up the elevator shafts, filling the elevators, and bursting out through the doors on the first floor where it spurts, brown and murky over the newly waxed floorboards into the breakfast area.

Sunny streets.

A traffic-jam over by McDonalds. Cars honking their horns by the malfunctioning traffic-lights.

A hot breeze blowing through the park.

Dry leaves adrift across the lawn. Pushing onwards as the wind pushes it along the tarmac on the other side as an UAV takes off. A stealth. A Reaper. Fully armed.

This is what we believe in.

This is what we know: Ewo chewing on a bun.

Samuel's head in Rakel's lap.

And Rakel turns on the TV again. She turns to a channel showing nature-programs: Zebras, savannahs, killer whales.

And the water is filling the hotel basement

the kitchen

where pots and pans are floating alongside cabbages and cooking utensils, bottles and washing-up liquid, packets of sweet peas, parcels of plastic forks and plastic spoons, containers with offcuts and cold meat. And the water fills the plumbing

pours out of the hundreds of toilets and the washbasins on the first floor spurting from showerheads and bathroom drains

And the debris washes across the marbled floor

pushes its way through the corridors

where the surveillance cameras shortcut

past the control room

where the computers shortcut

and there are people in the doorways
pushing against each other
and the doors -
Who locked the doors!
Why are the doors locked!

Pause

One:

This is my voice.

I am the one talking.

When it's quiet – when there is nobody there to listen – and Rakel says:

Rakel:

What do you believe in?

Do you believe in anything?

Do you believe in anything at all, Samuel?

Beat

One:

And the stealth heads for the northern provinces of Aghanistan, the southern parts of Somalia, the western parts of Angola.

And the sun beats down on the scorched grass in the park
as the traffic jam slows and jilts, edging its way past the hotel, past the H&M,
trickles into the alleys – and the fallen leaves lift for a moment as the wind
sweeps them up in one swift movement
pushing them on to the curve and onwards
spiraling
red and ocher.

And the lights go out

all the lights are out

the only light there is is the flickering blue from the TV-screens

across the white leather sofa in a private suite

across the pink bedspread in a room for one
across the king-sized bed in a double
and a deer lowers its head to drink
and the riverbeds are running like dried-out veins across the Afghan provinces /

Rakel:

It hasn't rained all summer. How I wished it would rain.

One:

- as eight Afghan women herd their goats along the dried-up creeks carrying piles
of brittle wood on their back

And Ewo says:

Ewo:

Are you ready?

One:

And the water has reached the third floor now and it's still rising /

Ewo:

I'll show you how fast it can go.

One:

- and it will keep on rising
as it floods the breakfast restaurant
lifts the chairs, the tables, tear to pieces the flower arrangements all ready and
waiting for the evening's banquet
sweeping with it a dozen teak tables as it reaches the grand dining room on the
second floor
as it reaches the bar
its mirrored surfaces
its glass shelves filled with bottles of booze
bottles of wine
bottles of soda water
and the pressure rises
and it reaches the glass wall leading into the conference area

and the glass breaks
and the wall bursts
and as it collapses cascades of broken glass spurt, fall and sink to the floor
great piles of shards of glass, bottles, cutlery, chairs -- and through this broken
landscape drift the floating bodies
One by one at first
then in pairs
and soon there are hundreds of them
face up
face down
like sleepers
sinking to the floor as if the hotel is a gigantic ship about to keel over.

This is how it goes. The water will keep on rising until the room is full until the
room is bursting with water
cracking, sighing, shaking
as the pressure mounts
as the doors burst open
the doors burst open and torrents of water start thundering along the corridors
carrying with them suitcases and bags
hairbrushes and makeup-kits, toys and old train sets, condoms and diapers and
bundles of last week's newspapers
while Jo runs down the corridors
pushing her way amongst the panicking crowds
she can't find her girl
the girl with the brown coat
holding her oldest girl by the hand
carrying the youngest on her hip
She does not shout
She isn't making a sound
The baby isn't making a sound

They have their eyes on the elevator

Their eyes on the target /

Anna:

Faster! Make it go faster!

One:

– and in the park the grass is yellow and brittle from the lack of rain, the ground cracked, all dried out along the foundations of the multi-story hotel complex were the windows on the ground floor, the windows on the first floor and the windows on the second floor are about to burst open as the windows on the 3rd and 4th floor are about to burst open as the building is about to get filled with water

On the 6th floor

where the lights from the television sets are still flickering as the water reaches the 5th

and on the 7th Samuel is resting his head in Rakel's lap

and there is a trembling

a murmur

from underneath their feet

from the sealing

the inside of the walls

and they can hear how the building shakes and sighs

and Rakel just sits there watching the screen

watching the hummingbirds

a baby giraffe being born

a baby zebra being born

a baby zebra fleeing a lion attack

a hyena attack

the dust pluming around its feet

the blood in the sand

the fear in its eyes

and the water engulfs the cameras in the west wing

soon the whole hotel will be flooded
as it pushes up the elevator shafts
as the walls crumble
as the walls get skinned, leaving the wallpaper drifting in dark gigantic sheets
covered with subtropical flowers
and Jo is running now
she has lost her oldest
and her girl in the little brown coat
she is clinging on to her youngest
as she has left her safe stand by the elevator
as she is forced by the crowds unto the staircase
further and further up
away from the water
away from the screams and the shouting
up to this creepy silence
and as she walks
the wall of water follows
and as she opens the door to the staircase leading on to the floor above this
one
the water is there
waiting for her
thundering over her as an avalanche
as a wall of dark green glass
as it collapses over her
as she stands inside it
holding onto her baby
as the baby gets ripped out of her hands
as the pram gets ripped out of her hands
and Rakel is watching a pelican take flight – an eagle take flight – an albatross
take flight and a stealth fighter, a Reaper, crosses the sky leaving behind a pale
white trace across the bright blue and Samuel says:

Samuel:

-

One:

- as the windows on the ground floor burst open
as the windows on the first floor burst open
as the windows on the second floor burst open
as the windows on the 3d floor burst open
and the water spurts out of them, falls in cascades along the building's shiny
surfaces
showers the air
waters the earth and the withered grass
washes over park-benches
awakes the sleeping homeless
drenches the shoe-polishers and the dog-owners
wets the dusty wings of a flock of sparrows
and the earth drinks it up
and the stone hard ground becomes wet and dark
and from somewhere deep down the water starts to pull upwards
and inwards
into roots and stems
into budding branches
a violent burst of green

Tale Næss – Oslo – october 2015

