

STRANGER ON A PLATFORM

a play
by Daniel Diaz

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Cast of Characters:

STRANGER
EX-LOVER
WOMAN
MAN

NARRATOR

OLD COP
YOUNG COP

YOUNG MAN
NUMBER ONE
NUMBER TWO
DIRECTOR
NUN
TV
JESUS
WAITRESS

SNR. GUARD
JR.GUARD

VOICE 1
VOICE 2
VOICE 3
VOICE 4

september, 1996
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We hear the sound of rain and footsteps running. The footsteps stop and then we hear knocking on a door. Stranger is standing in front of the door. Woman walks to the door.

WOMAN: Yes. Hello!

STRANGER: Get away from the door.

WOMAN: What? Excuse me, what is this about?

STRANGER: Get away from the fucking door! ... GET AWAY FROM THE FUCK'N DOOR!

He takes a gun out from his belt and aims it towards the lock. She stepsback, terrified and puzzled.

STRANGER: ...NOW!

He shoots the gun, breaking the door open. He kicks the door open completely and walks in.

NARRATOR: Unlimited vision productions. In association with. Black on white films present.

Woman runs to the other end of the room.

STRANGER: Don't move.

WOMAN: ... Do you want money...?

STRANGER: Don't say a single fuck'n word. ... I'll put a bullet into your head if you do.

He walks towards her, aims the gun towards her face, grabs her shoulder and pushes her down to the floor.

STRANGER: Or else... *(He imitates the sound of a gun being fired)* Yes? Nod, if you understand. *(She nods.)* Nod again if you believe me! *(She nods)* Good. ... Lie down. *(She stares at him but does not move)* Lie the fuck down, I said! *(She lies down)* Very good. ... Relax, ok. I'm not gonna hurt you. ... Where am I? ...Answer the fucking question! You can talk. Come on answer.

WOMAN: Can I please say something? ... What's going on?

NARRATOR: A Sam Fibber film.

He aims the gun closer to her face.

STRANGER: Please. Answer my questions first. Then, I'll answer yours.

NARRATOR: Stranger on a platform.

Stranger is strapped to a chair in a small dark room. He is lit from the back by the moonlight. We can hear downtown night life from outside. Close to him, there is table. On the table, there is a lamp and a note pad. There is a chair not

too far and a rotary dial telephone lies unhooked on the floor beside a phone book. In a corner, Old Cop is standing, smoking a cigarette.

OLD COP: Questions. That's all we got. ... Just a few small ones. ... We're not the ones with the answers, mister nice guy. ... Come on. Do good. We didn't ask you to come here. It was your decision, wasn't it? ... Oh, no it's true, my mistake. ... I think were the ones who arrested you? ... My partner and I thought we'd spend another few days trying to trace you down. ... Man, we had nothing. Nada. No name. No address. No face. ... I was getting really fuckn tired of looking for you. ... Are we gonna hafta get intimate with you, little man.

OLD COP stretches his back and yawns.

OLD COP: You want a cigarette, little man?

It is morning and a soft morning light seeps into the windows of eachroom. EX-LOVER is in her room, sitting at a small work table. She is writing on a small piece of paper. WOMAN walks out of the kitchen. She is holding a magazine in one hand and a glass of juice in the other. EX-LOVER gets up, walks out of her room into the living room.

EX-LOVER: Hi. How d'you sleep?

WOMAN: *(Looking up from her magazine)* Oh, fine.

WOMAN sits on the couch and goes back to her magazine sipping her juice once in a while.

EX-LOVER: I slept like shit...again. I never seem to be able to sleep as well as I used to. It's probably the rain. 'You know how many days it's been raining? Five days straight. Oh, do you mind if I borrow your umbrella again today? Just in case.

WOMAN: No. Go ahead. I'm not going out.

EX-LOVER: ... I listened to the radio this morning. They said it might continue for another five days. ... Oh, ya, I meant to tell you. I read this article. You should read it. It's at work. I'll bring it over. It's about this woman writer. You probably know her. ... It has a beautiful photo of her. You could probably add it to your collection. ...How's the work going?

WOMAN: Alright.

EX-LOVER: Oh, ya. Before I forget. I'm going to the market today on my way back home. Do you need anything? *(She picks up a pen lying on a coffee table)*

WOMAN: *(Looking up from her magazine)* Ya. ... Could you get some aaaa... zucchini and...some kidney beans...oh and a cucumber...and...a bag of raisins. *(EX-LOVER jots these items down)* Can you do me a favor?... *(EX-LOVER nods yes)* There's a little indian store a few blocks from where you work, if you have time could you maybe pick up some rice. It's a little place but it's not hard to find.

EX-LOVER: Sure. *(She places the piece of paper on the coffee table)*

MAN steps out of the bathroom. He is clean shaven and his short hair is

glistening. He heads towards the kitchen.

MAN: 'Morning. *(He disappears into the kitchen)*

EX-LOVER: Good Morning!

WOMAN If you don't find it, don't worry. I'll get some on the week-end.

EX-LOVER It's no problem.

MAN walks out of the kitchen and into his room. There, he makes his tiny bed and folds his pyjamas which he places into the drawer of a dresser in a corner of the room. Simultaneously, EX-LOVER walks into the bathroom, WOMAN finishes her orange juice, places the glass on the coffee table, lies down on the couch and continues reading. MAN walks back out of his room and walks towards the kitchen.

MAN: There's no milk left. Who's turn is it to buy milk?

We hear the toilet flushing.

EX-LOVER: *(from inside the bathroom)* We don't take turns. I thought you knew this. Whomever sees there's something missing, goes and gets it and writes it down by the fridge. On the note pad put there exclusively for that.

MAN: *(from inside the kitchen)* Yes, I know. And at the end of the month, along with the bills, we calculate who owes what to whom. Still, someone buys more than others. I wonder whom that might be?

EX-LOVER: *(from inside the bathroom)* You said it was alright to work it out this way. Is there a problem?

MAN: *(from inside the kitchen)* Shhhhit!

EX-LOVER: What?!

MAN quickly steps out of the kitchen and into his bedroom. He picks up the phone.

MAN: ...Come on, come on... Hello. It's me. ... I was calling to- ... I'm home. ... I know....Of course.... Yes, sir. I'll be right there. ... In aaaa... What? ... Yes, sir. Innnn...ten minutes. ... Goodbye. *(He hangs up)* Shit, shit, shit, shit, shit!

MAN walks back into the kitchen.

EX-LOVER: *(coming out of the bathroom)* What happened?

MAN walks out of the kitchen, picks up his trenchcoat and umbrella from coathangers by the entrance door and walks out. Outside, we see him running off.

WOMAN: *(her face still in the magazine)* He's been late a lot.

EX-LOVER: Oh.

WOMAN: ...He told me last night.

EX-LOVER: Doesn't he get back really late? ... You know, I heard him once, I think it was about midnight or one in the morning. Usually, I don't hear him at all. Either he works really, really hard or he's leading some kind of double life.

WOMAN: I doubt that.

EX-LOVER: So you guys talk.

WOMAN: Not really. Just last night.

EX-LOVER: What did he say? Do you know anything about him?

WOMAN: No. ... He came in and said that he was gonna be fired if he didn't stop coming in late for work. Then he went to bed like he usually does... I guess. *(She gets up, picks up her glass and walks to the kitchen)*

EX-LOVER: What d'you think?!

WOMAN: *(from inside the kitchen)* About what?!

EX-LOVER: 'You think he's alright?

WOMAN walks out of the kitchen, into her room, picks up a pack of cigarettes, walks out of her room.

WOMAN: Sure. *(She goes into the bathroom)*

EX-LOVER: ...Hey. What are you doing later on? Would you like to meet downtown and have lunch together. I've got two hours to myself in the afternoon. I thought it would be nice to hang out.

WOMAN: *(from inside the bathroom)* ...Well, I really wanted to get some work done.

EX-LOVER: Oh. Come on ...It'd be fun. We could actually get to know each other. *(laughs)*

The toilet flushes.

WOMAN: *(walking out, smoking a cigarette)* Maybe on the weekend.

EX-LOVER: ...O.k....Well, that sounds good. *(She picks her coat up from by the door, puts it on and grabs an umbrella)* Have a nice day. *(She picks up the piece of paper from the coffee table and leaves)* Bye.

WOMAN: *(walking to her room)* Bye.

EX-LOVER is in her room. She's lying on her bed. The phone rings three times. She slowly gets up as the answering machine goes on : (EX-LOVER's voice imitating a southern accent) Howdy! You've reached the right number if you dialed right, in which case, ladies or gentleman, we'll be mighty pleased to call

you back... - *She reaches the phone, picks up the receiver and presses down on the stop button and the voice stops.*

EX-LOVER: Hello. ... Oh. Hi. ... I'm...good. I'm fine. How are you? ... Oh. Good. ... I didn't know. ... No. I thought maybe you were back home ... So... what's up? How's-... Right. ... School? It's alright. It's over. Ya. Done with. ... What was that? ... No. Now I gotta figure out what I'm gonna do. ... Right now? No for life. ... Oh. I was just reading. ... Fine.
..... Listen, I gotta go-... Oh, downtown. They renovated. ... Exactly. Listen- No, I haven't seen them in months. ... He is your best friend. ... So, what is it that you called for?... What? ... I don't know. ... I don't know. ... This isn't the- ... O.k., Ok. How are you? You know... That's good. That's great. Really. ... No. I mean it. ... I do. Wow. ... No, I'm not. ... Ya. ... No. I don't. ... Forget about it, o.k? I gotta go. I'm really tired. It's past eleven. ... No. That's not it. I gotta get up early. ...Ya. ... Exactly. Maybe I'll talk to you soon. Take care. Bye.

She hangs up and walks back to her bed. She sits at the side of her bed and takes a cigarette out of a pack of cigarettes on the night table. As she lights the cigarette, she starts to cry. She mumbles the word "shit" a few times. The crying lasts a few seconds. She wipes her eyes, takes a deep breath and continues smoking. Lights out.

STRANGER opens the entrance door and walks into the apartment. He is completely wet. He mumbles something to himself. As he closes the door behind him, he stops for a moment and looks around. He sees the living room and the entrance to the other rooms. He stares at the space as if sizing it up. There is a sofa, a tiny library with a few books on it, a small television set and one or two things hanging on the walls (paintings or portraits, it does not matter).

STRANGER takes his hat, his coat and then his shoes off. He stops for a moment, thinking about something and then undresses completely until he is naked. He leaves the clothes folded on a pile beside the door. From the entrance, he walks towards the sofa. As he is walking, he stares out into the audience. He sits on the sofa and continues staring. EX-LOVER walks in from another area of the stage dressed in a bath robe. She steps into the bathroom which is filled with steam. She stands beside the bathtub. At her feet are a series of big vases filled with hot water which she pours into the tub until it is full. She touches the water with the tip of her toes and takes off her robe. As she climbs into the tub, STRANGER stands up from the couch and walks towards the small bookshelf. He slowly examines the titles, then picks one out. All the while, she washes herself and hums a melody. He begins to read a passage from the book.

STRANGER: Up to this point, I have soaked my healing in boiling water and burnt my wounds on the softest of pavements and the roughest beds of leaf. My friends abandoned this boat long ago, estranged enough for me to recall their names as if stars from another universe. Empty bank of shoulders. Strange to be so hopeful under the guidance of blind hands. Perhaps it was to humor when they said, in loud voices, that I would find sincerity in the taste of brothers and warm breasts. They lied. Their demeanor portrayed so much strength and I hung on, addicted to flattery and love. Was I so wrong?

EX-LOVER stops humming. She steps out of the bath and dries herself. STRANGER walks back to the couch, lies down and closes his eyes. Lights out on STRANGER. EX-LOVER gets dressed in her room. Lights out.

WOMAN is in her room, sitting in her bed, writing. STRANGER is fully dressed, standing on the couch, his arms outstretched. He tells the audience about a dream that he is having. The only thing that moves is his face.

STRANGER: I was on that bus and at the border, the one that sells tickets to every game, the cops wear leather jackets and spit chewed tabacco, we stopped. The bus driver explained the procedure: we had to empty out our pockets and recite our lords prayer if we wanted to get through the border. If we didn't know our lords prayer we'd be held for questioning and be banished. The cop later explained that being banished meant staying at the border until a trial or judgement. I was sitting next to a mother and daughter. They names were Cecilia and Luisa. Cecilia, the daughter, told me that the lords prayer was a fabrication brought over from Europe and that I had nothing to be nervous about since I was white and would obviously be let in. Luisa, the mother, whispered to me that Cecilia had been tortured in their native country and that I should disregard her fantasies. Luisa said that she would take care of everything. When the cop came over - the cop was the anchorman on the evening news - he looked at me, stared at my belongings and said : "Who was Jesus Christ?" I looked at him and I started to laugh. He was actually very nice, just like on t.v. and also started laughing. He said: "Gotcha! ... You're alright, kid.". He then turned to Cecilia and Luisa. Luisa immediately looked at me and smiled very faintly, invading me with her eyes. I couldn't hear what the cop was saying but he had lots of question for them. Suddenly, I could hear Luisa talking to me without uttering a word, as if our thoughts were mixed up. And she recited the lords prayer into my thoughts which I immediately repeated outloud so that everyone could hear me. The cop only turned around once. I said it louder and even tugged at the sleeve of his blue shirt so that he could see how good I was at this and would leave my new friends alone. All the while, Luisa starred at me and her daughter answered the cop's questions. I was so absorbed at reciting the lord's prayer that I didn't notice when the cop was escorting Cecilia and Luisa to the interrogation office inside. I ran to the front of the bus but the bus driver stopped me and said that he didn't want any problems with the state, that he was already wanted for manslaughter in five cities and that enough was enough with breaking rules. I tried to explain to him that those two women were innocent, that they knew the lords prayer better than anyone here. He answered that we all had a cross to bear, that I had found mine. He asked me to sit back down. As we waited to see if they would be let in, one of the passengers, an old high school friend of mine who didn't recognize me started a sign along. It was fun. Someone even started imitating an old Elton John song. The engine started and the bus driver, who I later recognized as Louis Armstrong, began giving us the "have a nice trip" speech. Cecilia ran to the bus, told Louis Armstrong that they weren't coming with us and that she had to take her bags. As the bus driver took their bags out from the baggage compartment, Cecilia came to get the small bags from their seats. As she left she told me that I was lucky and that I should forget the lords prayer, pray for my self and that one day we would meet again. She kissed me on the forehead and disappeared. The bus was already miles away from the border and a few houses and farms were burning on the horizon.

WOMAN puts down her notepad and goes to sleep.

EX-LOVER is in her bedroom. She is sitting in front of a mirror applying a little bit of make up. She is humming. She takes her hand bag, throws in a few

last things, looks around the room one more time and walks out into the main area. STRANGER is still lying naked on the sofa.

EX-LOVER: What the fuck. ... Get up!

STRANGER wakes up and sits doing, not responding to her.

EX-LOVER: What are you doing here - How did you get in? ... Answer. How did you get in?! Helloooo! Can you hear me! Hellooo!

STRANGER: Ya, ya. ... Relax, I'm still a bit out of it.

EX-LOVER: How long you been lying there?

STRANGER: Fine. 'Glad you asked. 'You know. This and that. Pretty good.

EX-LOVER: C'mon, what's going on? What are you doing here?

STRANGER: Oh, you know, same ol', same ol'. How' you doing?

EX-LOVER: Stop that. Answer the fuck'n question.

STRANGER: ... Don't get upset. I wanted to see you. ... There are a lot of unresolved things, you know... I tried to call but you were never home. I left messages with your roomates.

EX-LOVER: The truth. What are doing here?

STRANGER: Everything's cool. Everything is fine. I flew in for the weekend...

EX-LOVER: Get dressed.

STRANGER: I need a place to stay. Just for two days.

EX-LOVER: Put your fucking clothes on. You always do this kind of shit. Get out of here. Now.

STRANGER: No. I came from far away...

EX-LOVER: I don't wanna know. Now come on. This time, it's gonna be nice and smooth and you're just gonna leave. Put your clothes on and we'll forget about this whole thing.

EX-LOVER heads to the entrance and opens it. STRANGER looks at her intensely.

STRANGER: *(smiling)* ... Come here.

EX-LOVER: *(trying not to scream)* Get the fuck out! Get the hell out of my house!

STRANGER: Are your roomates here. ... I just got in. Can't we just talk for a little while. *(After a long silence)* It's been hell you know. Being away. I don't know anybody anymore. I don't talk to people as much.

EX-LOVER: That's some improvement.

STRANGER: Come on. Come an' sit down beside me. You can't be that hateful.

EX-LOVER: *(trying not to scream)* Don't confuse the shit, you fucker! You're the psycho, you understand. So just shut up!

STRANGER: Jesus, you're laying it on hard. ...Psycho. O.k., whatever.

EX-LOVER: I'm not listening.

STRANGER: ... You're really mad at me. You really hate me. Ya. I guess I've been pretty nutso. ... I just came here to talk to you. I don't hafta stay. Whatever. It's up to you.

EX-LOVER: Yes. Please go.

STRANGER: Alright.

EX-LOVER: Faster. I'm gonna be late for work.

STRANGER: Give me some time.

EX-LOVER: Come on. For fuck sake. What is your fuck'n problem.

STRANGER: Just to figure out what I'm going to do. I've gotta find a place to sleep for the night. Maybe...

EX-LOVER: I'm not lending any money to you. I'm not helping you out. Jesus, you're not sleeping here!

STRANGER: Give me a few more hours. ... When do you get back?

There is a silence. At which time EX-LOVER is thinking the whole thing through.

EX-LOVER: Late. ... Anyway, it's none of your business.

STRANGER: I'll be out of here by six in the morning. ... I'll stay put. I'll sit here watch t.v.. I might hafta make one or two phone calls. I'll even pay for them.

EX-LOVER: You're not touching my phone.

STRANGER: You can't throw me out. That's one thing you can't do.

EX-LOVER: You're fucking nuts. Give me your wallet.

STRANGER: My what?

EX-LOVER: I'll hold on to your wallet. ... If you're here when I get back, which is four o'clock in the morning, you won't get the wallet back. If you're gone when I get home, give me a call and I'll tell you where to find it..

STRANGER: You don't hafta go this far to prove your point.

EX-LOVER: If you don't like it, get out right now.

STRANGER: You really don't trust me.

EX-LOVER: It's not that. It's that I really, really hate you. I'll call my roommates later on to tell them what's going on. But if I here that you bothered them, I'll call the fuck'n police! ... I promise.

STRANGER: I also promise. I mean I promise to do what you say. I'll get dressed right away.

STRANGER goes towards the front door. Takes out his wallet from his pants. She takes it and walks out.

STRANGER: Thanks. It was nice seeing you.

WOMAN is sleeping in her bed. She is dreaming. Someone is knocking on her door. She gets up.

WOMAN: Yes. Hello!

STRANGER: Get away from the door.

WOMAN: What? Excuse me, what is this about?

STRANGER: Get away from the fucking door! ... GET AWAY FROM THE FUCK'N DOOR!

He takes a gun out from his belt and aims it towards the lock. She steps back, terrified and puzzled.

STRANGER: ...NOW!

He shoots the gun, breaking the door open. He kicks the door open completely and walks in. Woman runs to the other end of the room.

STRANGER: Don't move.

WOMAN: ... Do you want money...?

STRANGER: Don't say a single fuck'n word. ... I'll put a bullet into your head if you do.

He walks towards her, aims the gun towards her face, grabs her shoulder and pushes her down to the floor.

STRANGER: Or else... (*He imitates the sound of a gun being fired*) Yes? Nod, if you understand. (*She nods.*) Nod again if you believe me! (*She nods*) Good. ... Lie down. (*She stares at him but does not move*) Lie the fuck down, I said! (*She lies down*) Very good. ... Relax, ok. I'm not gonna hurt you. ... Where am I? ...Answer the fucking question! You can talk. Come on answer.

WOMAN: Can I please say something? ... What's going on?

He aims the gun closer to her face.

STRANGER: Please. Answer my questions first. Then, I'll answer yours.

WOMAN is sleeping. STRANGER is standing in front of WOMAN's room. He opens the door and sees her in bed. She is lying half naked, wearing her underwear and a tight old t-shirt, the sheets covering almost halfway. Her face is in the pillow. We shouldn't, as of yet, be able to distinguish it. He stands watching her as a smile slowly grows on his face. He walks out, leaving the door open. In the hallway, he stops in front of her door.

STRANGER: *(to himself)* Miss? ... It becomes so quiet in this house when no one is awake. Would you mind if I woke you up. To talk. To get to know you. Now I know this sounds creepy. I'm just so tired of being lonely. I know your roommate. She doesn't trust me. I don't blame. I'm not to be trusted. I've told people though not to expect much from me. ... What do I want? Wrong question. I don't have answers like that.

He walks to the living room and gets dressed. He puts the book back to its place. He walks out, wearing the humid clothing. Outside, he stands in front of the door and moves his entire body as if in a frenetic warm up, standing directly facing the door.

Simultaneously, WOMAN changes position in the bed, mumbles faintly, still asleep, then turns on her back so that we can see her face clearly. She opens her eyes and stares at the audience for barely a second and yawns. She starts to stretch and then goes under the sheets hiding her entire body.

STRANGER: *(to himself)* We need to feel the impulses leap into the unknown. Grounded and devoting ourselves into one particular activity like furious ants. No. A personality should develop like a glass of tea and ice under the sun. The right elements into the right circumstance. It'll happen. And disguises will bring us through the obscure doorways. Even the ones swimming in light, the hardest ones to fall into. I like you no matter who you are. Your face is beautiful and my name is the name you've always wanted to hear. Young, not too old. Skilled and free. I can spend. Retreat into the woods. My mystery, loving, false.

Woman is lying on a couch watching television. It is nighttime. She is flicking the channels.

VOICE 1: Whatever makes you and your co-workers feel better, Lynda. I'm quitting!

VOICE 2: But, Richard. I'm sure we can find a compromise.

VOICE 3: Wait til you try the speed and comfort of the Velocity -

VOICE 4: ...I was convinced. So then I phoned up and talked to Charlene. She was helpful and patient -

VOICE 1: Tonight. On ZBYB. Two hours of back to back solid non-stop laughs. -

VOICE 4: No, mom. I don't wanna wait 'til I'm married. I mean, how old were you guys when you had me? -

VOICE 2+1: "We're gonna temp your tummy, with the taste of nuts and honey. It's a honey of an o ...

-

VOICE 3: He, Lisa, he, That two-timing fool, never even came to visit me when I was in the hospital.

ALL VOICES: BOOOOO! -

VOICE 4: Gosh, that was beautiful weather today. Let's just see what's in store for the upcoming...
-

VOICE 1: We can't do anything about your son, anymore. We did the best we could. Oh my beeper's buzzing. The nurse has a few papers for you to...-

VOICE 2: ...on yesterday's briefing, seemed positive.

VOICE 4: " We are positive that our point came across and that the opposition is now fully... -

All VOICES laugh like a Laugh track.

VOICE 3: It's not an umbrella. It's my fathers' toupe. My father's gonna kill us both if he ever finds out.

They laugh again.

OLD COP: ... Come on. Do good. We didn't ask you to come here. It was your decision, wasn't it. ... Oh, no it's true, my mistake. ... Didn't we arrest you? ... My partner and I thought we'd spend another few days trying to trace you down. Man, we had nothing. Nada. No name. No address. No face. ... I was getting really fuckn tired of looking for you. ... Are we gonna hafta get intimate with you, little man. ... You want a cigarette, little man?

She turns off the tv. Simultaneously, we hear knocking at the door. Then the doorbell rings.

WOMAN: Hello. ... Hello?

STRANGER: It's late. I'm sorry, but it's late at night.

WOMAN: Yes. I know. Who is it?

STRANGER: I'd like to come in. Sit down and talk.

WOMAN: I'm imagining the worse though. Who you could be. Some psychotic pervert. A voyeur going out on a limb. A rapist.

STRANGER: But maybe I'm stranded. ... Miss, could I please use your phone. I know it's late. It's just that I need to call a taxi.

WOMAN: You know I won't let you in. This is the type of situation that I fear the most. I can't even see your face.

STRANGER: But you can imagine me through my voice. You know that I'm a human being and that there is the possibility that what I'm saying is true. I could really need your help.

STRANGER looks out into the audience.

WOMAN is sitting in her bed, writing.

WOMAN: My dad's always complaining about the government. Says he's always getting eat up. My mom's been more quiet lately. Dad says the cattle's gonna kill him this year. If the bills don't. A few months ago he asked me what I had decided. You put me on the spot like that and I get all funny. So I went to hang out with my ex-boyfriend. He's the only friend I have in this fuck'n place. I applied to the art school way out east. It's really far. I've been corresponding with this girl whose gonna let me move into her place. Mom thinks it's a great idea. She's not a bloody farmer, she said. All she does is read. Which is not true. All my old friends are married. They've all moved east. My ex-boyfriend couldn't imagine leaving this place. He's gonna come and visit. Take me out to one of those after-hours bars. Treat me to a real date. Dad absolutely wants to pay my airfare. Even though I've been saving up from my part time job. At the airport, mom gave me so many preserves and dad was so stoic ... it's a good thing I cried.

STRANGER is dressed in a trenchcoat and hat, walking through the rain. He is completely soaked.

STRANGER: Where the fuck was I? ... Where...was I going? ... Trying to find truth in a place after having a woman, happiness, the other sweet things, was like loosing everything over and over again. ... I'd considered other possibilities. ... A rope. Heroine. Sex. ... After twenty or so years of lies you begin to feel the need for imagination. And from then on every single fuck'n wild bump becomes the best new addiction coming up. That was the great thing about my occupation. I didn't need stability. I didn't want it.

MAN is in his office. A small dimly lit room with a desk and a chair.

MAN: You return to your office. Your cubicle. And the lights are still on even though no one is there anymore. Everyone is gone. They are either home, on their way there or having a drink somewhere or something else. The lights are ugly in there. They turn into a light blue if you stare at them long enough. The emptiness that sort of fills the offices, the sort of disappearance of life, it has a kind of powerful effect. I always stay later than everyone else. It helps me. The sensation that that office has on me is the kind that one has when one goes out into the night where normally there are a bunch of things going on, loud traffic and people, the flashing and buzzing of lights. Out there, aswell as in here, even the air has a sound and a rythm to it. When you go out into those places late, late at night and listen, observe and not a soul is walking around, not a single automobile is turning into the street, somehow - and this might just be a matter of perception - things seem to still move as they usually do. ... The office is no different night from day. Of course at night I talk less than in the day. So you return to your office. It helps you. You find that night compared to day has much more to offer than your usual day time hustle and bustle. The solitude is very much appreciated. You think it relieves a lot of the tension you suffer on a daily basis and also it lets you look back and view your workspace from a different perspective, one that is detached and yet still implicated. You return to your office to finish some work you can complete on the computer and maybe make up a list of things that you will do in the coming week, but especially the next day. Actually, you do this last part without great concern for exactitude but it enables you to absent yourself from tension. You sit at your desk to prepare files and piles and binders and all the materials you might need for your upcoming day. It means a great deal to you. You stop a few times and think about the things you might be able to complete, start or continue working at when you get home. This takes more serious consideration. At home, in the apartment, in the room where

you sleep and work, there isn't very much space. The ceiling is lower. You still work late and often you fall asleep or nod off on the the desk. This is almost unavoidable. Something from outside the window always wakes you up and you get undressed and put on pyjamas and quietly walk to the bathroom. You walk silently and into the bed, fall asleep where things stop. Before you wake up, you dream, the same way you go to the office the next morning. You know it will be there. You are convinced of its' dependability.

STRANGER stands behind the entrance door. He is looking at the audience.

Outside. MAN is wearing a trenchcoat and holding an umbrella. After a few steps, he begins to dance. He dances a short "singing in the rain" style dance. He smiles uncontrollably, bringing down the umbrella, letting himself be drenched. He tries to improvise a song.

MAN: "There's a very sunny rain shinning tonight.
While I'm hiding under this umbrella of light.
How can one crazy guy be so in love
With the mere idea of
The sun."

He continues smiling before arriving at the door. At which point he becomes serious and enters.

STRANGER is lying on a bed in the center of a dark room. At one far end is a television set with a vcr and several video tapes scattered around the floor. At another end is a small table filled with guns, knives, bullets, gunholsters and a pair of black leather gloves. On the floor is a rotary dial phone. He gets up. He is in his underwear. He walks to the television set and sits down in front of it.

STRANGER: Good morning. I mean good evening. How've you been? I understand that you've been feeling lonely these past few days. That during my absence you might have had the impression that you were unwanted, undesired. Well, my lovely little friend, let me impress you with this news. I miss you and can't wait to push the right buttons that will get you smiling again.

TV: *(in a british accent)* You're lying. You're going to run off and save the world with all your mates and leave me undone again in this lonely and dark flat.

STRANGER: Now, come on. Lets see. Talk to me. Say something nice and comforting to me.

TV: Like what? I'm out of ideas. I feel like I'm becoming out of circulation.

STRANGER: Something that'll soothe me, make me forget the world outside.

TV: Shut up. ... I'll tell you. Tonight. On Channel 7. A film that was made for television. But a fine one. Something you can let yourself be wrapped around by. Pure unpretentious fun and entertainment. In exactly thirty seconds.

STRANGER makes the sound of a ticking clock as TV simulates foreplay until TV reaches climax.

TV: Yes... Oh good. Mmm... I... I think we should stop... No. I mean... Yes. ...I was ... Oh gooooo. Oh my god ... (*ad lib*)

TV: Click!

VOICE 2: Confirmed rumours of an elegend serial killer continue to strike fear in the citizens of our city. The "Heart Killer" seems to be at his tenth murder so far. We'll have more details on that and other stories later on News at Eleven.

VOICE 3: Revolutionary driving. ... Out with the old and in with the new. Fully equipped with air bag and emergency lock breaks. The Apresura. Forever young. ... For the ones who constantly change.

VOICE 1: And now back to our Monday Night Movie. A Stranger Becomes You. Viewer discretion is advised. Monday night movie! ... Opening credits.

NARRATOR: On a dirt road, at night, a young beautiful man is hitchhiking. It is raining heavily. He is completely soaked. A few cars pass by, spraying him with water. He continues walking and hitchhiking. As he seems to get more and more frustrated, suddenly a car stops. From within the car, a woman's voice screams out:

NUN: "Where are you headed?"

YOUNG MAN: "In to town."

NARRATOR: In the shadows, we see her hand signaling him to come in. He climbs into the car breathing heavily, thanking the lady. Inside the car, he notices classical music coming from the car stereo and an impressive crucifix hanging from the rear view mirror. Then he turns to her. She is a nun, young and beautiful. She smiles at him and turns her eyes back to the road. He smiles back, though she is visibly not looking at him. He becomes self-conscious. He thanks her once more and tries to make small talk. She smiles at him once again and says nothing. ... We can still hear the classical music. ... It is still raining and the car drives into the city. The nun tells the young man to take out a pack of cigarettes from her bag, to light a cigarette and to give it to her. She takes a few puffs and turns off the radio. The car arrives in front of an alley close to a busy downtown intersection, she stops the car and leaves the engine running. She says:

NUN: "Is this alright?"

YOUNG MAN: "This is fine. Thank you very much... Sister..."

NARRATOR: As he is about to leave, she grabs him with a strong hold by the shoulder. She says:

NUN: "Before you leave..."

NARRATOR: He sits back down. She takes another puff from her cigarette before putting it out. From her purse, she takes out a yellow envelope. She hands it to him and he grabs it. As they both hold it, she says:

NUN: "The main office wants you to report to them in fourty-eight hours. These are your instructions. Everything you need is in here. It was a pleasure meeting you. You have beautiful eyes. ... Take care of yourself."

NARRATOR: He steps out of the car, amazed, holding the envelope. The nun drives away. He stands on the sidewalk in the rain and looks around. ... Title appears: "A Stranger Becomes You." ...Commercial break. ... Other opening credits appear on the screen. ... Late night. An all night diner. The diner is practically empty. Our young man is sitting alone in a corner drinking a cup of coffee. He is counting his change on the table as the waitress pours him a second cup of coffee.

YOUNG MAN: I won't have enough for a second cup of coffee, ma'am.

WAITRESS: Don't worry, kid, it's on me. Enjoy.

YOUNG MAN: Thank you. ... Excuse me, you wouldn't happen to know where the Castle Hotel is?

WAITRESS: Why? You got no place there, kid.

YOUNG MAN: I'll ask someone else then.

WAITRESS: Sure, kid. I know. Downtown. About five blocks away from here. On this same street. That-a-way.

NARRATOR: The young man finishes his coffee and we see the open envelope on the table with a few papers. On one of them, in hand written ink, it is written: TONIGHT. CRYSTAL HOTEL. ROOM 7. WAIT FOR FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS. PASSWORD: YOU HAVE BEAUTIFUL EYES. As he leaves to pay, he stuffs the envelope into his coat. At the cash register, the waitress smiles at him.

WAITRESS: You're not the first one asking for that place. You got pretty eyes. And you look smart so take care of yourself, kid.

NARRATOR: He leaves, baffled, out into the rain. ... An old hotel lies in the distance as one or two cars pass by in the rainy night. The young man walks in. A bellhop sits in one of the lobby sofas crying, holding a handkerchief to his bloody nose, at the desk, an old man, the clerk, appears to be fast-reading an old hard cover. The young man approaches the counter.

YOUNG MAN: Excuse me.

NARRATOR: Immediately the old man slams down a key on the desk, never lifting his eyes from the book. A big seven is marked on a tag attached to the key.

STRANGER is in the apartment, his clothes are wet and he is smoking a cigarette. WOMAN is at the entrance. The door is open.

STRANGER: You didn't hafta let me in.

WOMAN: It wasn't something I wanted to do. Some stupid thing about charity. Karma.

STRANGER: You also wanted to take a chance.

WOMAN: I can see through you, though. Escaping. Lying. Deceitful. Maybe charming. A great guy really. Full of potential. But you just haven't found it. So you feed on others. With your fantasies and your bullshit stories. Should I ask you to leave?

STRANGER: I just got here.

WOMAN: You're impolite. Taking one of my cigarettes without asking. Is it possible for you to give once in a while.

STRANGER: Give me some time. We've only just met. I will change. For you.

WOMAN: You're the same. You want comfort. And not just for one night. You remind me of my father.

STRANGER: Is that why you let me in.

WOMAN: No.

STRANGER: You're a writer aren't you?

WOMAN: No. Sort of.

STRANGER: Well, you are or you aren't.

WOMAN: Then I am.

STRANGER: What have you written?

WOMAN: Poems. Anything.

STRANGER: Read something to me.

WOMAN: I hardly know you. I don't like to read my stuff.

STRANGER: I'll read you something of mine.

WOMAN: You're also a writer.

STRANGER is on the phone. WOMAN is watching him from the kitchen entrance.

WOMAN: Who are you calling?

STRANGER: A friend who can come and get me.

WOMAN: What were you doing in the city?

STRANGER: It's still busy. ... Oh, I had an address of somewhere I could stay for the night. But the address doesn't exist.

WOMAN: Why don't you take a taxi?

STRANGER: I don't have any money on me. This won't take long. I'll just try a few more times. ... I hate it when a line is busy. Don't you just hate it when it's busy.

WOMAN: Ya.

STRANGER: This is a nice neighborhood. *(She nods)* Have you lived here long.

WOMAN: We've lived here for over a year.

STRANGER: You and your...

WOMAN: My roommates.

STRANGER: I see. ... That's good. ... It helps pay the rent and cover the bills.

WOMAN: That's kind of the idea. ... So, I guess it's my turn to ask you something. What are you doing here?

STRANGER: It's a bit of a long story.

WOMAN: Ok, whatever.

STRANGER: I mean, it's a long and complicated story.

VOICES are heard as STRANGER sits down on the couch, turns on the television and watches.

VOICE 1: The stranger walks at night.

VOICE 2: A dog follows then disappears.

VOICE 3: The stranger looks for friendly faces where he knows there are none.

VOICE 4: He stops at bus stops in the middle of the night.

VOICE 1: He knows there is a train station too.

VOICE 2: He stares at bums and prostitutes.

VOICE 3: Hankers to see the full moon.

VOICE 4: He smiles when he gets closer to the station.

VOICE 1: He is thinking...

VOICE 2: Am I already old and stupid...?

VOICE 3: Dead even.

VOICE 4: I have killed other men and women.

VOICE 1: Maybe they will come back for revenge.

VOICE 2: He can stand there for hours.

VOICE 3: For over a thousand thoughts.

VOICE 4: Waiting for trains and hellos and goodbyes.

VOICE 1: Perhaps a kiss.

STRANGER is lying on the couch. MAN walks in w/ an umbrella, puts the umbrella down, takes his coat off and wipes his shoes on the mat. He stops as soon as he sees STRANGER

STRANGER: You're home late.

MAN: Excuse me? ... Who are you?

STRANGER: I'll be staying here for the night.

MAN: Do you mind answering my question.

STRANGER: I just moved here. I like the mood. Very friendly people. I spent the whole day downtown with everybody. People in this city sure know how to smile. Strangers smiling... Lovely. Amazing.

MAN: Yes. Now, please. Who are you? ... Ok. ... Please leave, mister.

STRANGER: I got in this morning. I'm waiting for some money. Cash. My friends are wiring some money through the bank. It'll turn into cash. It's kind of complicated. I can only pick it up tomorrow. First thing. Ten Sharp.

MAN: Listen. What is this all about? Is this a joke? Whatever it is that you want, I can't help you.

STRANGER: My father always used to say that.

MAN: What?

STRANGER: What what?

MAN: Nothing

STRANGER: Oh. Ok.

MAN: I mean, I don't have... - I can't...- What are you doing here? ... Ok. Alright. What are you...? Ok. What is your name?

STRANGER: He used to always ask for forgiveness. At least once a month. He was kind of cocoo, you know. Insecure, I guess. Dreams unfulfilled. God rest his soul. What a stupid thing to say. Didn't have a soul.

MAN: I'm terribly sorry to interrupt this beautiful moment, but I have things to do. I'm going to have to ask you to leave. Now.

STRANGER: At the station, I spoke to someone. I'm sorry, I didn't mean to change the subject, but you know, sometimes one blabbles on about whatever's going through one's head and it doesn't matter...- I'm always talking too much. That drove my dad crazy.

For a short moment there is silence while they look at each other. MAN notices STRANGER's damp clothes while STRANGER smiles back

STRANGER: I like your apartment. Very familiar.

MAN: Where's...

STRANGER: She went to sleep. ... I'm glad you didn't arrive too late. I really wanted to meet you. I could tell you're a good man. A righteous man.

MAN: Mister... Are you alright? ... Should I call an ambulance? Mister. Well ... Listen. Just sit down. I mean, don't move. I'll make something...to drink. So just stay there while I get...- what would you like? ... I'm also gonna make a phone call. But before, I'd like you tell me your name.

STRANGER: You're starting to sound like a really bad movie.

MAN: What!?

STRANGER: Movie...Pictures...Film?

MAN: Would you like me to call the police?! Is that it? ... Listen, you either answer my questions or I'm gonna hafta call the police.

STRANGER: You were all set to do that. Alright, alright. ... Coffee. Two cream, three sugars. No milk, 'fucks up my stomach. 'Love coffee. Thank you. I apprecialte your hospitality.

STRANGER reaches his hand out and shake's MAN's hand.

STRANGER: Would you like to know my name?

MAN: ...I don't. And you are leaving.

STRANGER: But it's my birthday.

MAN: I don't care!

STRANGER; Why can't I stay?

MAN: I can't believe this?

STRANGER: I'm twenty-five years old today.

MAN: Please get out. ... Alright. You have fifteen minutes to leave my apartment. You will hafta go. Otherwise I will hafta call the police. I'm sorry.

STRANGER: I'll just hang out a while. A few hours. I'm sure you've got a bit of time to spare. And then I'll go. I don't hafta stay here the night. ... But it is my birthday.

MAN: No. Out. ... Ok. Fifteen minutes.

STRANGER: It's very nice of you. No one would have let me stayed this long. People normally feel violated to the point of inflicting violence on me. You see, I'm very determined. Thank you. For respecting me. ... maybe you could bend the rules a tiny bit this time. Maybe invite me to your home for a short while longer.

MAN: Even if I did want to, I couldn't. I'm too busy. A lot of work. And it really is not in my habits to invite people like you into my house.

STRANGER: I won't make a sound. I'll just sit quietly and you can go ahead with your work. If there's anything I can do for you. I'll do it. I'm at your service. An errand. Something to eat. ...

MAN: Don't make me call the police.

STRANGER: I'm usually not this lonely.

MAN: What?

STRANGER: I have no problem with that kind of... life. I'm very used to it. But today. It's been unbearable. My...birthday. Birth day. It's so fucked up. ... I don't need to talk to anyone. I don't need to cry on anyone's shoulder, I just... I don't know. ... You're looking at me like I'm crazy.

MAN: No. Not at all.

STRANGER: You're right. I've gone crazy. Useless and crazy.

MAN: I did not say that.

STRANGER: The eyes. You didn't hafta talk. I heard you shouting. ... My time's up. Goodbye.

MAN watches him go to the door. As STRANGER is about to leave...

MAN: Wait a minute. ... You're crazy, right?

STRANGER: That's what I think.

MAN: Is it really your birthday?

STRANGER: Yes.

MAN: You're not twenty-five, though. No, you're not.

STRANGER: Doesn't matter. I'm gonna go out for a walk. I need to take some air. I'm not used to talking about important things. Especially about me. ... Do you mind if I come back.

MAN: Euh. No. Of course not.

STRANGER: Tell your roommate I'll be back.

MAN: Alright.

STRANGER walks out. MAN stands alone in front of entrance door, baffled. STRANGER stays at the outside part of the entrance and stares at the audience.

STRANGER: *(to audience)* Look closely. What do you see? Imagine. Think. I'm coming out of a bad relationship. Is that it? My mother just died. I'm searching for myself. I'm going to India. I need to use my hands. I'll work on my car. I've always wanted to write a book. An autobiography. Maybe raise a family. Watch t.v.. Live out in the woods and grow my own vegetables. Help people in suffering countries. Volunteer. Sacrifice my middle-class self. Jog every morning and make something special with this life. Eat well. Be

charitable. Pray. Learn a craft. Make tables and chairs. Paint big large canvases. Abstract. Open up a business. Nothing too extravagant. Make ends meet. Put bread on the table. Take in a movie once in a while. Fire up the old barbecue. Save up for a rainy day. Deposit those down payments. Little weekend with the family. Little junk food once in a while. Nothing too expensive. Just pick'em up at the daycare. Work out three times week. Hook up. Get a tune up. Programme the vcr. Maybe a joint now and then. Happy hour on fridays. Invest in the stock exchange. Take a chance. Have an affair. Take up golf. Talk business. I'm searching for myself. Read self help books, cookbooks, porn mags. Meditate. Explode. Run away. Be killed. Take a chance. Search for yourself. Become a kid. Become a woman. Become a homosexual. Become a foreigner. Become a victim. Become a fool. Become a respectable human being. Become a cross between a politician and a circus performer. Right now. Become this.

The apartment is dark. MAN is lying on the couch still dressed and sleeping. STRANGER walks back in, the door is unlocked. By the door, STRANGER picks up a note. We here MAN's voice.

MAN: I'm sorry about earlier tonight. I did not know that you were a guest in our house. Please, make yourself comfortable. Again I apologize. Thank you. Signed, my name.

STRANGER goes into WOMAN's room. The phone rings three times. The answering machine goes off.

EX-LOVER: Howdy, you've reached the right number if you dialed right, in which case, ladies or gentlemen, we'll be mighty pleased to call you. Oh, and don't forget, haaave a niiiice ... (STRANGER walks to the answering machine and turns it off before the message ends)

MAN is in his office. His desk is now full of files and papers.

MAN: It is preferably eight in the morning. Or perhaps a few minutes earlier. Although I am passionate when it comes to the work that I do, the mornings are an essential time in which I can gather my thoughts and strength to function in the best manner that I can. The office is the ideal place suitable for this kind of preparation. The simple designs of colour and form give the office an unintrusif feeling letting ones thoughts and imagination settle on the work that is to be done. It is not really much different from any other office, the walls are white, carpets grey, desks light grey, wall separations dark white, the doors have blurred windows on them and the ceilings have the typical neon fluourescent lights that are so popular for their low cost efficiency. I have my mug waiting for me, clean, as I have washed it the night before, to pour into it fresh percolated coffee that is prepared by the office boy, Eddy. Eddy also hands mail, sends out faxes, run errands, listens to evryone's problems, goes to pick up lunch when we buy out, fills in the gaps, on occasion types out form letters, addressed enveloppes, he also has a way with the computer technologies and therefore gives a hand with that most of the time. He would normally leave last, if it weren't for me. I was once an office boy and so I take great pride in giving Eddy the odd good advice that might help him out in his day to day work. Since he is still young and caught up with his hectic work load, he has not, as of yet, thanked me for my inspired recommandations. Was I also as distracted as that when I was just an office boy. ...

STRANGER is in WOMAN's room. She is in her bed, sleeping.

STRANGER: *(whispering)* ...Are you sleeping? ... Wake up. I can't sleep.

WOMAN: *(half asleep)*What? ... What is it? ... Oh it's you. What is it? Do you need a blanket?

STRANGER: No. Your roommate is sleeping on the couch. ... I can't sleep anyway.

WOMAN: Maybe you can use his bed? ...

STRANGER: I don't know if I should ask him.

WOMAN: ...Give me a second. We'll go wake him up.

STRANGER: No. You don't hafta.

WOMAN: I'm tired. Let's go. Before I fall back asleep.

MAN, WOMAN and STRANGER are on the couch. MAN is sleeping.

WOMAN: *(half asleep)*Wake up... Come on... wake up... *(to Stranger)* He won't wake up.

STRANGER: What do we do? ... Maybe there's a good movie on tv.

WOMAN: You wanna watch tv? ... At this hour?

STRANGER: Ya. It's fun.

WOMAN: Click.

YOUNG MAN: I was just a run away. One of thousands who needed something different. More love. More affection. Adventure. That kind of thing. I needed to fuck around a bit. I guy I'd met back home told me there'd be work here. Go to the Star Diner. Start from there. You'll see what I mean. And hey, you got nothing to loose, he said. And he was right. It looked like I was gonna make a lot of money. That was gonna be important if I wanted to survive. ... They'd gathered many of us. All young, fresh faced, innocent and idealistic young men. ... There was Number One, me, Number Two, Three and Four. They were the only ones I would ever meet. Each one of us had our own particular dreams. Each his own passion. Or so I guessed. We weren't allowed to discuss personal matters. One thing was for sure, we were a bunch of driven and energetic boys. We had all arrived in the city at the same time and immediately appointed to our personnal Director. A tall older woman, always appearing under a shadow. A dark and imposing figure.

DIRECTOR: Are you enjoying yourselves so far?

YOUNG MAN: Ya. It's a cool city. ... But... I'd like to maybe go out more, you know. To a bar or something...

DIRECTOR: How are you getting along with your "collaborators".

YOUNG MAN: That was us. Collaborating on one same and important goal.

DIRECTOR: A fight essential in the struggle that will lead us into VICTORIA...

YOUNG MAN: At first, we had been brought one by one into a small apartment building where we would live all four of us in a two bedroom apartment. The apartment had ben built for jockeys whose height didn't surpass 5 feet. A small place with a tiny toilet bowl, a small bathtub, small beds and pillows and chairs and framed pictures of race tracks and horses on the walls...

DIRECTOR: In two to four weeks time you will each receive specific directives as to what you will be expected to do. ... For now, that will be all. But you must remember this : it is of the utmost importance that you educate yourselves with the intentions and goal of the Main Office, That you be aware - always - of the fact that your participation is essential.

YOUNG MAN: The four of us listened carefully. Dramatically taking in this great responsibility. The first one ever handed to us in such a way.

DIRECTOR: Number two, come here. ... I want to talk to you. ... I like you. You remind me of someone. Your gentle curiosity. I can see in your eyes ... the sharp glow of hunger ... thirst for danger.

YOUNG MAN: I don't know, Director. ... This is all great, really. I mean, I didn't know it would be like this...

DIRECTOR: Little Number two, if you have any questions or problems. Get in touch with me. ... I'll be on the look out.

YOUNG MAN: Yes, thank you.

DIRECTOR: But you must not forget this : I've only said this to you. The other numbers do not need to know.

YOUNG MAN: I understand. ... Director.

DIRECTOR: Yes.

YOUNG MAN: When will I start? When can I have a mission?

DIRECTOR: Only when the main office has decided so. ... You need to accomplish many other things before.

YOUNG MAN: We were recruited. We obeyed.

DIRECTOR: *(to audience)* "Recruiting" is a simple procedure. With the help of paid "Identifiers" strategically placed at key environments along arriving points for young green and willing men. Bus drivers, waitresses, philosophers bums, wise prostitutes and others paid off or in need of usefulness give helpful directions to these boys who have already been lead to these environments by secret recruiting agents in other cities.

MAN is lying on the couch, he opens his eyes.

MAN: *(to audience)* My boss came out of his office. He walked straight towards me. The other employees got up from whatever they were doing and applauded him. He snapped his fingers and they stopped. He hardly ever left his desk. He sat beside me, put his large hand on my shoulder, rubbed it for a second or two. "Yes. Sir. What can I do for you? Sir." "You're doing fine. You're doing a good job. ... " Then he put his head on my

shoulder and started crying. "I've done the best I could. Never stopped. Never thought I was failing. ... What went wrong, boy? How could I have not seen it coming?" "What's wrong, sir?" "I'm empty. Old and cold. Useless. Loveless." Then he got up, walked to the center of the room, wiping his eyes with his handkerchief and began shouting orders at all the office personnel working, minding their own business. He ended his rage by shouting "Stop looking at me!" He walked back to my desk and said: "Boy. You have been an important investment for me and the company. You know that we are grateful. I have a proposition for you. ... We have had some rumours of the unethical and competitive nature. We would like you to take care of these rumours. Set them straight, boy. Tomorrow morning, Eddy will hand you some mail sent by a company called Main Office. A large yellow envelope. Everything you need is in there." He came close to me and hugged me. Do you think he's still sleeping? I don't know? Are you...

WOMAN: Are you awake?

MAN wakes up. He sits up beside WOMAN and STRANGER. MAN yawns and stretches.

MAN: What are you two doing here? Did I fall asleep? What time is it?

STRANGER: At what time do you work tomorrow?

WOMAN: You'll be late again? Did you get in trouble with your boss?

MAN: What? What's going? How did I end up on the couch?

STRANGER: You'll never guess what you said in your sleep?

WOMAN: I think he had a wet one.

STRANGER: One that's got you sweating a bit.

MAN: *(to Stranger)* Oh, hello. ... I'm sorry about earlier.

WOMAN: What happened earlier?

STRANGER: We had a little misunderstanding. ... I'd really like to go to sleep.

WOMAN: Now, I'm awake.

MAN: Do you mind if I ask what movie that was.

STRANGER: Some crappy tv movie.

WOMAN: It was kind of stupid, I kind of liked it.

STRANGER: So where do you work?

MAN: I do office work.

WOMAN: I thought you just said you wanted to go to bed.

MAN: I make revisions and corrections on daily data and pretty much everything that goes through the company. I know the place in and out like...

WOMAN: Like the inside of his brain.

STRANGER: Do you like it?

MAN: I like it a lot. What do you do?

STRANGER: A lot of things.

WOMAN: He's a spy. Works for your competitor.

MAN: Really!

WOMAN: No. He's here on vacation.

STRANGER: I'm leaving tomorrow. I couldn't get in touch with my friend, where I was supposed to stay tonight, so...

MAN: Where do you live?

STRANGER: I kind of came here to ...forget, you know. I don't really...

MAN: Oh. Don't worry. That's fine.

WOMAN: That's what he answered me. ...You house someone for a night and they don't give you any information about themselves.

MAN: That's what it's like these days. People are weird creatures.

WOMAN: Oh well. ...

MAN/WOMAN: Come on!!

STRANGER: Well. ... Since you insist. ... I come from a city. I'm sure you know it. It's nicknamed ...the City of Tears. I don't know if you guys know, you probably don't, but, you see, there's been a civil war going on inside the city. The national news doesn't cover it. The local news either. No newspaper has ever written any article about. In fact they don't even know about it.

MAN: A civil war? In this country. That's hardly possible.

WOMAN: That's ridiculous.

STRANGER: It's true. It's going on right now. ... I'm not trying to convince you. Friends of mine have died. My best friend got killed just recently. ... I know you probably won't believe me. I'm gonna tell you something that not many people know. ... What I'm talking about is underground warfare being fought right at this instant. But there are no soldiers, no tanks, no missiles, no guerillas or any bacteriological warfare, it's a very different kind of battle. I should stop. ... That's all I can tell you. ... I know it sounds weird. I'm not asking you to believe me.

MAN: You're serious, aren't you?

WOMAN: Look at me. ... You're not lying. 'Making this up to make yourself seem important.

MAN: Ok. Wait a minute. Let's say all of that's true...

WOMAN: Why are you telling this to us?

STRANGER: The truth. ... Honestly, I don't know. ...

WOMAN: Oh, come on. You expect us to believe that. The things you're saying sound serious. They also should like they're come out of a trash novel. I don't think you would just come right ahead and just tell us that easily if it were true. Sorry.

STRANGER: Why? Why not, if I felt like it. I'm allowed. ... You two are the first people I've met since I left.

WOMAN: What about your friend. Where you were supposed to stay.

STRANGER: That person's not really my friend. I was given that number by a contact. A collaborator.

MAN: A what?

STRANGER: A - One of the people I worked with. A colleague. ... Listen, I haven't talked to normal people in years. I've been living in total isolation for a long time. Only talking and dealing with people from...from my work.

YOUNG MAN stands in a hall way at the Castle Hotel.

YOUNG MAN: Beautiful eyes. Knock. ... knock. knock-knock.

DIRECTOR: Come in.

YOUNG MAN: A waitress at a diner told me...

DIRECTOR: How was your trip?

YOUNG MAN: I hitchhiked.

DIRECTOR: You have an envelope for me.

YOUNG MAN: It's a little bit wet. I was told that maybe...

DIRECTOR: You have two possibilities, young man. ... Sit down. ... Participate. Or leave right this instant.

YOUNG MAN: Well... I'm looking for work. If you can help me.

DIRECTOR: Pay attention. In or out.

YOUNG MAN: I want to work. That's my goal. I'm hard working. I'm interested...in pretty much everything. And, eh, I'm great in all types of work, 'mam. People like me a lot. I have high resistance. I'm patient...

DIRECTOR: Shut up.

YOUNG MAN: What's the job, 'mam?

DIRECTOR: Would you like a drink?

YOUNG MAN: Sure.

DIRECTOR: Will you participate?

YOUNG MAN: Euh, ya, of course. I want a job, right. ... You don't see me leaving, do you?

DIRECTOR: Sit down. And drink.

YOUNG MAN: History of the City of Tears as told to me, on the very first night I met her, by my Director, the one, the only, the lady who...

DIRECTOR: As a child, my father fought side by side with the great commanders and strategic specialists that gave us our cause. He was nameless, but his actions are echoed out through the streets and spirits that run amok in this magnificent and sad city. It was built by three families. Two, that still fight in the bloodiest of all battles that we live through til this day and a third whose ominous power of evil over all sides conquered our will of fraternity into war and blood. This city was once of grass. Tall monuments erected over natural lanscape were considered home for the new born, the living and the dying. Although harmony never has existed, it was once dreamed of and words to that effect are written in volumes on Library walls hidden deep under the rubble. Work was means for creativity and common good and thus the city prospered for a while, each one of them hoping it would last, believing in the image of dreams until it might fade away like all else they had heard of, I am told. And so it came, as maybe it could not have been avoided. This city of urban livelyhood over grass spoke too many insulting words and blinded too sharply the eyes of expansion. The third family was born and resolutely took over. A family so big, so precise and sharp that neither good nor obstinance could foresee it's cloudy rapture over us. ... My father killed many men. He was also gunned down. My mother took care. And I learned and grew strong enough to conceal and charge my rage until I was appointed "Agent Within Secrecy". ... We seek here VICTORIA. As it was once described in theory buy one of our immortal intellectuals. Never having fought himself, he arose through his pen an imaginary system of logic and equal wealth. ... When you have a goal, your plans begin to enrich and succeed. ... VICTORIA is our determination. ... The city of tears will cry as if struck by the news of it's child's death until resolve. ... Today, you, young man, have been included.

STRANGER, MAN and WOMAN are still on the couch talking.

STRANGER: And you, what do you do?

WOMAN: ... I write.

In the dark room, YOUNG MAN and NUMBER TWO

YOUNG MAN: Number One was special. He talked to me as a friend. He had ideas. And he shared them. He was also a good drinker.

NUMBER ONE: (*drunk*) Goddamn mother fuck'n shity prick. Fuck her. Fuck the fucker. You know what her fuck'n problem is?

YOUNG MAN: Her fuck'n problem?

NUMBER ONE: It's that mystery. That bullshit aura she's got. Crappy lies! 'T's got her all untouchable and shit. Makes me sick. ... Here's to a clean operation! Without the use of weapons. ... Here's to gentle planning and niceness to the extreme. ... Here's to you, Number Two. Whatever the fuck your real name is. ... I love ya. Like a brother.

YOUNG MAN: Go to sleep.

NUMBER TWO: No. ... Ok. Your the boss. I obey. ... Nighty nite. Don't let the bed bugs bite... La di da, da da...

YOUNG MAN is thrown into a room. The room is dark and bare. A figure stands in a corner. YOUNG MAN lies on the floor.

YOUNG MAN: Mister Director. May I speak?

DIRECTOR: The consequences of your behaviour thus far in our organization have proven to be a source of questioning for us all. The odd manner in which you have excised your duty in the short time you have been among us gives me no other choice but to execute the full range of power upon you. Congratulations number two. Welcome to the game.

NUMBER ONE and NUMBER TWO are in the dark room.

NUMBER TWO: Nighttime. It could have been morning. We hadn't been awake in days. 'Just waiting. Going over every inch and detail of the plan. Was it gonna work? Were we ready? Were we ever ready? ... We sometimes talked about being too old for this kind of work, Number One and I. ... For games. ... Were they games? Hiding out. Maybe too many eyes to this head. Observing everything all the time. I couldn't even sleep anymore without dreaming about one of the operations, about outcomes. At nighttime, we got ready. Number One.

NUMBER ONE: I did my warm up. Regular exercise. Stretching. Focusing. Not meditation. I hate that word. Spiritual crap. I focus and fly. Number Two.

NUMBER TWO: I mumble to myself. (*Number one mumbles*) Nothing coherent. Just noise. Before every operation. Each sound taking possession of me. Pacing my actions into the strength I needed to be unstoppable, unthinking, driven into the execution of my role in the operation at hand.

NUMBER ONE: Carrier. Intimidator. Eliminator.

NUMBER TWO: Starter. Initiator. End Carrier.

NUMBER ONE: Number Two would...

NUMBER ONE: (*Screaming*) Ready. Joined. The main purpose of this grouping is to identify with exactitude and eliminate our target.

NUMBER ONE: We never had names to identify, just faces.

NUMBER TWO: (*Screaming*) Swift and cleanliness are the obvious manner in which we will proceed. Success is a given. ... Number One unlocked the door of each of our rooms.

NUMBER ONE: Each door had four locks. Each one meant to remind me of my four collaborators and of each of our roles during the mission. Each left their room and wait in the lobby of the building. I locked the doors from outside and join them.

NUMBER TWO: Then we'd take the subway.

NUMBER ONE: Number three always held on to the elimination tools.

NUMBER TWO: Number Four held vigil at all times, throughout the entire duration of the operation.

STRANGER is lying on his bed in the dark room. The TV is fully lit.

STRANGER: I can't remember the last time I had so much fun.

TV: I'm tired. Let's get something to eat.

STRANGER: What would you like?

TV: ...Do you ever look out your window Number One? Once in a while. To spot something passing.

STRANGER: There's no window here.

TV: I thought you could at least see outside. Poor boy. I didn't think I was the only movement you had in here.

STRANGER: Maybe it's not good for me.

TV: Don't get all carried away and dramatic. ... Number One, you've told me before that you like it here... So why should there be a problem.

STRANGER: It's not a question of liking. ... Lately, my bodie's been acting weird. Telling me something.

TV: Your body? Having little conversations with your body, heh? Bullshit. Look around you. Everything's falling apart. The Director's a bloody mess. The others aren't even talking anymore. They look like they're about to commit suicide. Poor bastards.

STRANGER: Number Three.

TV: The lad who never talks.

STRANGER: He never liked it. When he arrived they should have just told him to leave.

TV: Would you like to see?

STRANGER: I'm not sure. Let me think.

TV: The reception isn't very good, if that might comfort you.

STRANGER gets up from the bed and turns on the TV.

Another dark room, similar to STRANGER'S. In it we see a bed in the center of the room, an old style radio on a table beside the entrance door and a series of guns lined up on the floor by a wall. Number Three comes out from underneath the bed. He is drenched in shadow and barely distinguishable. He begins to run around the room, jumping over the bed, throwing himself on the door and waving his arms. When he stops, he makes a movement to scream, but we hear no sound. He tries again and stops. Number Three walks to the row of guns and picks one up.

TV: (violently) Pow. ... Pow. Pow.

STRANGER: I'm going back to bed.

TV: Wanna watch a movie or something.

STRANGER: I'm feeling tired. I'll see you later on. ... What time is it?

TV: You know what, dear, I haven't the faintest.

NUN: Knock. ... Knock.

STRANGER: Password.

NUN: You watch too many movies.

STRANGER: Is that you?

NUN: Are you gonna let me in or just interrogate me?

STRANGER: It's unlocked. (NUN steps in) It's been unlocked for a few days, maybe a week.

NUN: I didn't say anything. ... Hi.

STRANGER: I look like shit, don't I?

NUN: No. You look worse.

STRANGER: I think it's all over.

NUN: Shhhhh. ... I came to see you. Not Number One.

STRANGER: Can I say something? ... You look beautiful.

NUN: I have something. A present. ... Close your eyes.

STRANGER: Their closed.

NUN: Hold out your right hand.

STRANGER: Aaaa.....a knife.

NUN: Open your eyes.

STRANGER: Very nice. It's beautiful. I've...

NUN: You've never had one. I know. You told me the last time we sew each other. It's an antique. ... You're tired, aren't you? Your eyes are hollow. Your face is thin.

STRANGER: I missed you.

NUN: Let me kiss them. *(She kisses his eyes)*

STRANGER: *(He hugs her)* You're so warm.

NUN: Hold on, for a moment.

STRANGER: Kiss me some more.

NARRATOR: They begin to undress. Commercial break.

The Operation continues.

NUMBER TWO: Destination was Ivory Towers Incorporated. Sixty-eighth floor. Room 68 dash 12.

NUMBER ONE: Number Four stayed downstairs posted as a business man waiting for his ride.

NUMBER TWO: Number Three was hiding in the man's bathroom of the Sixty-eighth floor. ... We came in through the front doors, passing the surveillance cameras, signed in with the security guard on post and waited for the elevator.

NUMBER ONE: Fifteen seconds. Waked into the elevator and rode up.

NUMBER TWO: Never is a word spoken during an operation.

NUMBER ONE: Never is a look given, either, that could distract or influence a collaborator. ... *(long silence)* It's the last one, Number Two. ... I'm talking to you. ... Say something. ... Do you trust me, Number Two? ...Answer me, for god sakes!!

NUMBER TWO: Yes. I do. Shut up!

NUMBER ONE: The elevator doors open. I walk in faest and determined pace towards door number 68 dash 12. Number Two follows, covering all sides. Number Three waits for at the door witha bag of amunition or eliminators. I shoot at the lock. *(Number Two screams like a woman)* Tell the secretary to stay calm. Number One watches her, a gun pointed to her ear.

NUMBER TWO: Now this is what I didn't know.

NUMBER ONE: There had been a confusion concerning the room number. We were way off. I'm talking five floors off. So, I'm walking into the office and shooting everyone in sight. You see, there was only supposed to be one person in there. A balding man in his fifties, dressed in a light or dark grey suit, wearing reading glasses. The people who were there, were our people. Two Autonomous Numbers who posed as lawyers.

NUMBER TWO: The secretary was screaming so much and getting so hysterical that just ended up shooting her, I couldn't stand it.

NUMBER ONE: All of it was bad.

WOMAN, MAN and STRANGER are watching the tv.

WOMAN: *(to audience)* In nineteen sixty-nine, in a farm in Alberta, my mother was picked up from her bed and brought into the back seat of a car that was nicknamed "the cab". They laid her down because she was semi-conscious and they nodded "yes" to everything she said. The driver said that she was half there but that she'd be alright, that he'd known her since they were kids and that there was nothing to worry about. She was more than a fighter. She was a winner. My father knawed at his lip in the passenger seat and turned back stares at my mother every thirty seconds or so. The night was in full course and the country was desolate, quiet. My mother moaned once in a while and spoke to my father about staying calm and how she wished this was over. A pick up truck full of teenagers wizzed by at one of the intersections towards the town. They were singing "Me and Bobby McGee". They sang it very loud. The driver made a joke about one of the kids, the one driving the pick up truck. Something about good homes growing bad seeds. Neither one of my parents seemed to notice what he had said. The sky was perfectly dark with just enough stars on it's ceiling to be called a clear night. The driver said that he predicted rain for the coming days. He wasn't exactly sure when, but he knew that tears from heaven were coming. My mother began to regain consciousness. She asked the driver what time it was. My father answered and asked the driver to step on it. The driver laughed, asking him what movie he had seen recently and laughed again at his little joke. Farming equipment could be heard on one of the fields they drove by. The driver shrugged but decided to say nothing. He leaned forward, looked up into the sky and brought his eyes back onto the road. In a nervous tone, my father asked him what he was looking for. The driver answered that it was a beautiful night to be giving birth to new life. My mother smiled between pain. The town was near and my father held tightly to my mother's hand.

STRANGER and NUN are lying in bed in the dark.

NUN: Listen to the droplets of rain. There's a melody in there, isn't there?

STRANGER: I guess. I never really know about that kind of thing.

NUN: It rained the first time I came here. ... What's your real name, Number One?

STRANGER: Don't ask me that? I could tell you. I could tell you anything you wanted. I'm sure you have a name. It can't matter. You know that.

NUN: It was like this. In the middle of the night though. You could hear their melody clearly on the platform. I stayed there for hours. Waiting.

STRANGER: How long ago was that?

NUN: I can't remember. Five, maybe ten years ago.

STRANGER: Do you do anything anymore for your birthday?

NUN: Where not allowed.

STRANGER: Neither are we. But ... don't you just love birthday parties.

NUN: Celebrations. Used to love them. When you're just a kid, it's the best thing of all.

STRANGER: I haven't forgotten mine.

NUN: I have. ... I stayed on that platfoem the next morning. Watching the night disappear. Convincing myself to forget...

STRANGER: ...She was beautiful. Lying on my bed naked. We had such great sex.

NUN: To let go of everything until that point and move on, anew.

STRANGER: Don't you agree?

NUN: It wasn't bad. It was pretty good. ... Is that what you want to know?

STRANGER: Ya.

NUN: Well, it's quite a few years.

STRANGER: I love your thighs.

NUN: *(playfully)* Stop that.

STRANGER: You're a great lover

NUN: Do you have a cigarette?

STRANGER: What? ... You're kidding, right?

NUN: No.

STRANGER: I don't smoke.

NUN: There must be a lot I don't know about you.

STRANGER: Same here.

NUN: I hafto leave soon.

STRANGER: I know. That's alright.

They kiss. She gets dressed and leaves.

STRANGER, MAN and WOMAN are still watching tv. MAN yawns while the two others stare at the tv.

MAN: I think I'll go to sleep. *(he gets up)* Goodnight.

STRANGER: Goodnight. Sleep well.

WOMAN: Oh, goodnight. (*MAN leaves*)

STRANGER: ... Have you ever been to my city?

WOMAN: No.

STRANGER: There's a nice feeling there. It's intense but you can always great places to relax and hang out.

WOMAN: I haven't traveled much.

STRANGER: Oh, you should. South America. Ever been there. It's great. Tough place.

WOMAN: I'd like to go.

STRANGER: I mean there are place in this country compared to soouth america, in this city even. It's a fucked place. This country. I find people are so cold. Don't you?

WOMAN: That's what everybody says. I don't know, really. I don't know very many people.

STRANGER: You must have a lot of friends.

WOMAN: No.

STRANGER: Really. Wow. ... You know, I find that people aren't themselves around people they don't know.

WOMAN: Maybe they want to be themselves. That's their right. Why should I hafta be myself around you.

STRANGER: Because, I'm human. You've got everything to loose.

WOMAN: Loose my humanity because I hide something from you.

STRANGER: Exactly!

WOMAN: But you're also pretty mysterious. I mean it's true right.

STRANGER: No. It's not mystery. ... I'm afraid.

WOMAN: Afraid of what?

STRANGER: Too many weird memories. Afraid I'll end up talking about them.

WOMAN: But that's what they're there for. To reminisce, to conjure.

STRANGER: Not these.

WOMAN: What could be so bad? An accident, a car crash, a friend dying. ... (*Stranger freezes as if transported*) I'm sorry. I'll stop. ... How 'you doing? ... Ok. I know. Tell me about a good memory. I'm sure you're a good story teller.

STRANGER: What do you want me to tell you.

WOMAN: An anecdote. Something amusing. Try. It'll be fun.

STRANGER: The apartment ... where we were staying was the last floor of a small building. We were on the fifth floor. We were always there. This apartment wasn't under our names. Someone had paid for it. And before them, someone else. We had to pay the utilities. That was one of the deals with the organization. Every last Sunday of the month at noon we'd prepare a package with the money, cash. We'd leave it in a yellow envelope in the women's bathroom at the train station. Don't ask me why. I have no idea. They'd also leave some information there for us. About coming Operations, etc. What we had to pay was never that much money. It didn't seem like a complicated manoeuvre. And the train station didn't seem that heavily guarded. But still being a man, you couldn't just walk into the women's bathroom go into some stall and put a yellow package down on the floor under the tank. I had been the first volunteer. No one complained. So on June 30th. I took the subway downtown, got off on the appropriate station and walked through a series of underground shopping malls and tunnels into the train station. I was surprised there were not many people. I guess it was a slow day for trains. I just walked straight for the women's bathroom. I didn't check anything. I had no idea where the security cameras were, where the guards were, if any employees would notice me. I walked in as if hoping that no one would see me. Just another guy walking into the women's lavatory. As I walked in and placed my first step into the doorway, I saw, through the corner of my eye, two security guards walking fast, almost skipping towards me. I got in and just waited for them to follow. I made no attempt to prepare myself for an excuse or a way out of the situation and they rushed and grabbed me by the arms and sat me down on a toilet bowl. At first they just looked at me puzzled, then one of them started.

STRANGER walks into the bathroom of the train station. He is holding a large yellow envelope. He stands there reading the graffiti written on the walls, then he looks around. SEN. GUARD barges in followed by JR. GUARD.

SEN.GUARD: So. Is this what you're looking for? You wanna sniff a woman's toilet? You looking for something to arouse what's in there? (*Pointing Stranger's head*) Heh? You're a sick little fuck. ... - Mister. This here place is a sacred place. A place where a certain ritual is performed. You are aware of that? By members of the opposite sex, mister. Yes? And due to this obvious fact, members of the male gender are therefore - are you listening to me? - are therefore expected and obligated by moral code and the law to conduct themselves accordingly and with respect to the space entitled to women for this act, to the women as well and i.e., their privacy and private matters. ... Sir? Over here. This is where it's happening. You don't care, do you, about rules and obeying the law, you think this is some kind of game. I could dispatch my superior whenever I want, right now even, and he would probably involve the police. Because this doesn't just involve train station security, a public and private place, but also some kind of higher moral and legal jurisdiction. The police department, for example. Do you understand? That could mean the board of directors pressing charges against you. ... Hey, do not get me wrong, I don't mean to say that you're the first guy ever to walk in here, other men have walked in ... but by mistake. And you...don't seem to have been mistaken. - What's that? (*Grabbing the yellow envelope*) What are you? You are some kind of twisted fuck! What were you going to do with that envelope? ... Forget it. I don't want to know. - What do you think we should do with this one, Todd?

JR. GUARD: If I was to answer that question. Which I could. Though it would not have any relevance on the actual decision taken by you on this matter - would it. - I would say, leave this guy alone. But. Check his I.D., you know, proper formalities and procedure. Advise him

never to come back here, to stay clear of the property of Train Station Limited or to attempt to do so or he will be severely reprimanded, that you and I will take meticulous precautions to make sure of that if that is indeed the case, which we all hope it won't be. (*Looking at imaginary STRANGER*) Right?... That's what I think we should do, Chris.

Somewhere in the City of Tears.

NUMBER ONE: Rules and laws concerning a Subject Numbers under the protection and command of a Director.

DIRECTOR: There are two types of Numbers. Type 1 are called Subject Numbers. Type 2 are called Autonomous Numbers. All Numbers start by being Type 1. Very few Numbers are promoted or called upon to be Type 2 numbers. Type 2 Numbers will be discussed in following addresses. ... Subject Numbers Type 1, colloquially referred to as "Numbers". The purpose of a Number is to execute the orders of the Main Office. Groups of Numbers are appointed to Directors with the strict mandate to operate within a certain and specific field of knowledge, ability and or ability. Due the exactitude and discipline required from a number, the time allotted to his task is virtually absolute. Apart from specific cases where Numbers, be it for health or extreme purposes, are required to absentee himself, for the most part, a number lives in total consequence with his duty to the Main Office. Sleep aswell as activity hours are confined to any varied hours and subject to indefinite change at all times depending on the nature of operations. In the case of Numbers 1 to 4, assigned to yours truly, sleeping hours have been as of lately moved to nighttime periods and activity hours to daytime periods. Since a Number is confined to his room at all times except during activity periods, a Number is required to produce a written and detailed explanation of all reasons he might wish to participate in an activity beyond the limits of his room that does not include an activity, assignment or operation assigned to him by the Main Office. ... All orders are handed down to the Director, who can give certain orders, at his own discretion, to any first in command of numbers, in this case, Number One. ... A Director is given, by the Main Office, "Liberty of Evaluation" concerning all matters of discipline, mental health problems, nostalgic escapism, sentimental alienation and or any or all sorts of symptoms leading to fatigue. It is the Director's responsibility to catter to these matters. ...

STRANGER is wearing his trenchcoat and walking on the street, it is raining.

STRANGER: They were all sleeping. Like babies. I left the building. A few teenagers were hanging out on the street. I walked past them and moved on. I guess I was walking toward the train station. Again. I felt like leaving. Too bored to know why, too desperate to ever really leave. I don't know. The headlights of every car passing by made me jumpy and tense. The sound of rain irritated me. Underneath my trenchcoat, I carried my gun. I unwrapped some gum and chewed. it was healthier than smoking. I felt like one of those kids hanging out on the street. But I would never have the balls to spark up a conversation. Too scared to have fun. Too cool to be young again. ... In the station, I looked at the schedules. The next train arrived in two hours. From the west. It was gonna get cold tonight. Maybe it would snow. 'Wishful thinking. I just walked onto the platform and stood there. I felt good. So I stayed there for hours. Looking. Wondering.

STRANGER and WOMAN are on the couch. WOMAN gets up to turn the tv off.

WOMAN: Goodnight. That was a nice story. (*She kisses him on the cheeks and goes back to bed*)

STRANGER lies down on the couch and tries to fall asleep. MAN is in his bed not yet asleep and WOMAN lies in her bed, her eyes wide open. They all stare at the audience. Then they each count upto five and close their eyes.

STRANGER moves his table beside his bed. He makes some space on the table and walks to a bag sitting by the television. From it he takes out a pad of paper and a pen. He sits on the bed facing the tables and looks out onto the wall.

STRANGER: From where to start...? Obviously not from the beginning. From wherever. Whatever. Words. Weird words. Writing wacky whatever's in the way... Wait. Rain. (*he begins to write*) Sex. So there I was, I had it, but alone.... No. ... Loneliness had become like...an old friend I couldn't get rid of. We'd rent movies. ... have supper together, shoot the shit and always... this... tremendous feeling of weight... unhappiness, most of all, absence. No. That's too corny. ... Absence..absence... A void. There was a void. ... You know, come to think of it, it was probably just the job, the 9 to 5, the constant routine - I know you've heard this before - of expecting the expected. It was getting to me this time. What am I saying!? It was literally eating me up. It always came down to me. Me, me, me, me, me, me, me... Me.

STRANGER: It always rains in this city. And there aren't any clouds. I've yet to see the sun or spot rainbow. Who the fuck invented this place? Why the fuck am I here?... Can i be this lonely? Are the streets that silent? have I mistook so much? Are you all so blind? Is there actually life in this city? I need to go out. I need to see the light of day.

NUMBER TWO: So get a goddamn permission.

STRANGER: What do you think?

NUMBER TWO: I like it.

STRANGER: Here's another one...

NUMBER TWO: That's alright. I'm kinda really tired...

STRANGER: But do you honestly like em?

NUMBER TWO: It's just that, number two, ... what the fuck to do mean?

WOMAN and STRANGER in her room.

WOMAN: I'm talking about myself.

STRANGER: Your writing's cryptic. It's nice though.

WOMAN: You said you wouldn't say anything.

STRANGER: This is where I stop.

WOMAN: In the city that spits me.

STRANGER: Where I find my dream.

WOMAN: And hate with the soft breathing of a lover.

STRANGER: I know that I forget in the present.

WOMAN: That night is my day.

STRANGER: That so many lovers remember me in empty homes.

WOMAN: I have proof that good weather comes with the clang of hearts.

STRANGER: The proof is where my people don't grow.

WOMAN: This is where I'm at.

STRANGER: City of dirt and parcs forgotten each night

WOMAN: And although this work is undone

STRANGER: We'll affront the devil

WOMAN: We'll look inside our sad nocturnal vampire eyes

STRANGER: And kneel to salute the last possibility that was

MAN: The floor covered in embraces

STRANGER: Celebrating the useless birthdays and those who died

MAN: We don't hafta save time

STRANGER: The blind world awaits with open arms

YOUNG MAN during an Operation.

YOUNG MAN: It was during a routine Operation. We were wrapping up and each of us were heading towards a different entrance of a subway. As I walked in a plain and unnoticeable pace, someone laid their hand on my shoulder. I stopped. I did not turn around right away, ready for anything or any one dumb enough to try such a thing,

NUN: It's me.

YOUNG MAN: I turned around. There she was.

NUN: You were hitchhiking. Remember.

YOUNG MAN: There hadn't been a day where I didn't think about her.

NUN: I've thought about you.

YOUNG MAN: Really. ... Shit. Couldn't I think of something better to say. ... Walk with me. I hafta head to my base. We're being timed. ...

NUN: I walked with him and sensed a danger. He seemed tense. Not about his operation but about me.

YOUNG MAN: What were you doing here, in this neighborhood?

NUN: My church is around here.

YOUNG MAN: You're a real nun.

NUN: No. But I refer to everything as if I was. I'm so used to it. And you?

YOUNG MAN: I was visiting a colleague.

NUN: I knew about his operation. I knew where I could find him. ... I'm glad I bumped into you.

YOUNG MAN: Will you take the subway with me?

NUN: I'd much rather walk.

YOUNG MAN: Then ... where can I reach you?

NUN: For what?

YOUNG MAN: To talk.

NUN: I'll see you ... soon. Good bye.

YOUNG MAN: Goodbye. Sister. ... I watched her walk away into the chaos of the streets that swallowed her. ... In the subway I felt a joy I hadn't felt in years. A tingling sensation in my chest and my belly, even down to my legs. A feeling of emotion. ... Smooth and uncontrollable happiness.

MAN is sitting on his bed. STRANGER is leaning against his desk.

MAN: I like having nothing left to do. ... I never say that to any one. ... I like the part where I turn off the lamp by my desk and start getting tired. You know, the body gets into this state. It gets heavier. For one, the eyes, they itch or they get heavy. They're saying something.

STRANGER: "I'm tired. I'm tired!"

MAN: Exactly. At that point, I can't just dictate anything through my head. Everything else takes over.

STRANGER: It's funny that, eh? You just gotta stop at some point. Like there's a limit, right?

MAN: Ya, it sounds stupid to say, but it's exactly that. Simple, eh? And I end up in bed. I'm always alone. ... I'm ... I haven't...

STRANGER: You haven't what?

MAN: I sleep alone a lot.

STRANGER: Most people sleep alone.

MAN: Not all the time. ... I just, I don't...

STRANGER: You don't mind waiting for that kind of thing. Sure man. you're patient. You're lucky. People don't have patience these days.

MAN: Ya... I don't like regretting.

STRANGER: I'm way ahead of you, man.

MAN: ... I never have a hard time falling asleep...

STRANGER: Well, you close your eyes right away, right?

MAN: And my body obviously knows by now what it likes best to fall asleep with. What position, etc.

STRANGER: Do you masturbate?

MAN: What?

STRANGER: Do you jerk off before falling asleep? ... I mean, I'm sorry, you're in no obligation to answer that. 'Just a question. I always jerk off before going to sleep. Helps me sleep. You can't have sex everyday, right?

MAN: I guess not. ... I like the dreaming part. ... Do you like dreaming?

STRANGER: Love it. Dreams are interesting things. ... I had a dream with you.

MAN: With me? When?

STRANGER: Last night on the train. I saw sitting in front of me. Looking out the window. Can I tell you about my dream?

MAN: Yes. But how could you have dreamt of me?

STRANGER: I don't know. I know it's weird. But I swear to god it was you. Anyway, you were wearing this business suit, really classy, sort of like you were on an important and expensive business trip. You were almost pompous.

MAN: What happened? What was I doing?

STRANGER: Wait. Wait. Let me tell you. I'll get to that. ... The train was riding in the morning and I was waking up. You looked at me. I looked at you. The train looked like it was super sophisticated, modern, but there were all these old photographs of famous people and I think you were identifying those who had died and those who were still alive. And... ... No. Never mind.

MAN: Tell me.

STRANGER: I don't want you to get embarrassed, ok? It was just a dream. Youb were wearing an expensive watch but you asked me the time. For some weird reason, I looked outside and

looked for the moon or the sun but it was very cloudy outside and anyway the train was going so fast that I couldn't see a thing. I don't remember anyone else being there and you looked around to see if someone was watching us and then... No never mind. This is too weird. This gonna be embarrassing.

MAN: What!? Tell me. What is it?

STRANGER: You leaned forward and... you said thanks, that it was very nice of me to look outside and ... you kissed me. ... It was a wet...a wet dream, you know. ... It was just a dream. I shouldn't have told you.

In the train station, the GUARDS are hanging out.

SEN. GUARD: Did you read the Journal, there?

JR. GUARD: Nope. I don't read that shit. It's the honest truth.

SEN. GUARD: Well, excuse me, mister intellectual. ... Anyway, that guy I read about, he escaped from prison and we into this town and kidnapped some lady. I mean, at first he stayed at her place, you know, at gunpoint. And you know, he forced her. God knows what the fuck he made her do. So it seems, I mean, this article said that no one ever found out what happened to her. She disappeared. You ask me, she probably got the old six feet under.

JR. GUARD: Why 'you telling me this?

SEN. GUARD: Because this is important for you. ... I don't know. I'm just telling a story.

JR. GUARD: Go on. I'm listening.

SEN. GUARD: This guy doesn't want to get caught so he takes up her identity. He becomes this lady. He thought he was super smart, which might not be all that wrong considering the standards we have nowadays as to what counts for intelligence.

JR. GUARD: Ya. That's true.

SEN. GUARD: And he started walking around in this ladies identity. Her name, so his new name, was Elizabeth Reed. Obviously, at some point, he left the city and his name shortened to something like Elise...

JR. GUARD: Are you inventing now?

SEN. GUARD: No. Are you kidding? You can't invent this kind of stuff. This is really life. Listen. ... Elise Rich. A beautiful young woman, not too conservative, stylish, charming and a man. He started telling people that he was a computer analyst.

JR. GUARD: What is that anyway?

SEN. GUARD: A computer analyst? ... I don't know. You analyse computers. You see how they're done. Beats me. That's not important. ... What do I look like, a specialist?

JR. GUARD: ... Weird story.

SEN. GUARD: Makes you wonder, doesn't it. That guy, maybe he became a fag.

JR. GUARD: What do you mean? He's a criminal. First of all, obviously he's a fagget. But he's doing this for survival, so as not to get thrown back in jail. What do you care if he's one or not.

SEN. GUARD: I read about that.

JR. GUARD: About what?

SEN. GUARD: That it was a sensitive issue these days.

JR. GUARD: ... You got any gum.

SEN. GUARD: I stopped chewing.

STRANGER is at the train station.

STRANGER: The next day, I had to attempt to drop off the envelope. ... Number One suggested I dress up as a woman. Number Four found me some clothes and some make up. And they told me it was believable. ... Excuse me. Sir. ... Sir.

SEN. GUARD: Yes ma'am. What can I do for you?

STRANGER: I'm looking for the ladies room.

SEN. GUARD: You'll find a bathroom, lady. But it don't look lilke no ladies bathroom. *(he laughs)*

JR. GUARD: That's for sure. *(he laughs)* ... It's beside the souvenir shop.

SEN. GUARD: Right beside the Donut Shop, miss. That-a-way.

STRANGER: Oh, I see. Thank you.

SEN. GUARD: Her face seems familiar. ... You've never been to this station before, miss, have you?

STRANGER: Eh, actually, no.

SEN. GUARD: Well, if ever it would interest you, I will make it my duty to show you around. make you visit and better enjoy the wonderful facilities available to you by Train Station Limited.

STRANGER: Why, thank you, that's very nice.

SEN. GUARD: I'm serious ma'am.

STRANGER: I'm sure you are.

SEN. GUARD: It's my word. You can count on it.

JR. GUARD: Alright, already. I think she gets it.

STRANGER: It's very nice of you. Goodbye.

SEN. & JR.: Goodbye!

SEN. GUARD: That was a beautiful woman, there. A classy lady. And I treated her with respect.

NUN is walking through a parc.

NARRATOR: A nun sits down in a parc and reads a book, in the parc there are families picnicing, lovers sitting side by side and holding hands and children running around. She begins to cry, she closes her book and runs off. At a bus stop bench she sits down talking to herself.

NUN: What is going on? What is wrong with me? This is not who I really am. Is it? ... I go to a church. I never go to church. I don't believe in any of this martyr and guilt shit. ... I kneel down before Jesus and ask him, not for forgiveness, I don't believe in that crap, and I tell him, I ask him for an explanation or a way out. But he just hangs there like a dead bird in a museum. I get so angry. I'm fed up with this. ... AND SO, I START SCREAMING AT HIM THAT HE HAS NO RESPECT FOR THE MIND, FOR PEOPLES SANITY. HOW DARE HE CALL HIMSELF SACRIFICED. PHONEY LITTLE PRICK! I came for genuine help. Me. An unbeliever and then...

JESUS: Shhhh... Please, miss. Calm down. I don't want to call security. ... Please.

NUN: He comes down from off the cross and kneels beside me. He puts his hand on my neck. It kind of feels strange. ... I'm sorry. I'm just very upset. ... What can I do?

JESUS: I can not help you.

NUN: What? But you came down the cross. I can see you. You're touching me.

JESUS: You can see me. But you don't believe me.

NUN: Listen, I've got this problem. I'm not a nun. This is starting to freak me out. I'm acting like a nun. I'm not feeling sexual urges. I'm super humble and charitable and it's disgusting.

JESUS: I know. All I can say is good luck. You're a strong woman. You've already lived through a lot. Everything will be alright. It has all been taken care of.

NUN: Are you crazy?

NARRATOR: The nun leaves the church sad but with a new and regained strength. She returns to the parc and proceeds to read her book.

WOMAN is outside her room. She is leaning on wall, lost in thought.

WOMAN: I've been in this apartment for too long. I'm kind of tired. Just hanging out here. The last time I saw one of my friends was last christmas. She kept on asking me what was wrong. If I wanted to talk about it. I think I'm due for a tune up. ... "It's the laaaast chance to check under the hood. It's the laast chance. She ain't sounding too good. It's the laast chaaance to..." *(She continues humming the song.)* The new slow leaves. The old dust and dirt on the streets. The sort of fresh air. The wind doesn't bother us anymore. ... Spring. *(She goes to her room, sits at her desk and starts writing)* "In...som...nia. painted my pale and I levitated with the wolves and the thieves. In dreams I've known better highs."

STRANGER: Bored.

WOMAN: You like scaring.

STRANGER: Not particularly. Are you ever gonna show me what you write.

WOMAN: Maybe. If you're lucky. Are you lucky.

STRANGER: Apparently not.

He leaves and heads to main room.

WOMAN: Hey! Wait. Come here. ...

STRANGER: Me!

WOMAN: Don't be so sensitive. Come on. I'll read something to you. But you can't say anything. Not even a constructive comment.

STRANGER: I promise.

STRANGER and WOMAN are on WOMAN's bed. They are talking to each other but we can not hear what they are saying. WOMAN slowly caresses STRANGER's face and kisses him on the cheek. They smile at each other. He puts his hand on her neck and kisses her lips. She kisses him for a long time and starts to take off his shirt. He does the same until they are nude, kissing all the while.

Morning. The GUARDS are hanging out on a bench in the train station. They're drinking coffee out of styrofoam cups.

SNR. GUARD: Todd. What do you suppose is gonna happen today?

JR. GUARD: I've got a weird feeling. if that's what you're asking about.

SNR. GUARD: You know ... I was reading my horoscope, cause I read that kind of stuff once in a while. I find it's entertaining. "A stranger will surprise you and compromise your position. the outcome will favor you. Trust your instinct." I spent ten minutes reading it over and over. It caught my eye. What'd you suppose? I think it's all bullshit. Right? What do you think?

JR. GUARD: Whatever you say.

SNR. GUARD: I'm kind of serious here. I really wanna know what you think. You think I should listen to that stuff?

JR. GUARD: ... It's really not my place to tell you what to and not to think. But... if I was to give you my impressions on this kind of question, I would hafta say : What do you think?

SNR. GUARD: I just told you that I don't know what to think? C'mon, stop it. Just tell me.

JR. GUARD: WHAT - DO - YOU - THINK? How do you feel when you read those things in the horoscope or any other horoscope? Why is it that you go and look at that column every morning and memorize at least one sentence out of each five sentences reserved to your astrological sign? How do you feel knowing what you know from what you read? - What's your sign again?

SNR. GUARD: I never told you. You never asked. ... Virgo.

JR. GUARD: How much do you believe in this stuff?

SNR. GUARD: It depends. On a good day, I couldn't care less. When things aren't too well, I'll open it up and hope for something encouraging. You know, something that'll get me going and make me feel like it's gonna be a good day. And then there's "the lucky guess". That's what I call it. It's when I look in the horoscope hoping it's gonna tell me what I wanna hear. Like last week. I wanted Judy to take the kids for the week-end, so that I could have some time for myself. You know, it gets tiring being a single parent. So, anyway, I left a message on Judy's machine, explaining the situation and asking her for a favour, seeing as it wasn't her week-end and it being a delicate matter, I'd return the favour somehow. The next day, I read my horoscope to see if it mentioned anything that might give me a hint, since she was probably gonna give me a call that same day with her answer. So, I don't know if I believe it or to what extent I believe it. But, anyway, I read. I'm a naive, what can I say. Maybe I'm just an astrology junky, you know, like couch potatoes.

JR. GUARD: So?

SNR. GUARD: So, I wanna know what you think?

JR. GUARD: No. I mean, what happened? Did she or did she not take the kids for the week-end?

SNR. GUARD: No. She got really upset. She told me that "I put her in a really compromising position, that I was some kind of a son of a bitch for trying to break our contract, that it would disrupt the kids habits". I didn't hear from her for weeks. The fuck'n horoscope said that I had a vacation coming up sooner than I expected. ... Bullshit, heh. ... Hey you know that lady that comes by once a month?

JR. GUARD: What are you talking about?

SNR. GUARD: This one lady who asked me the time.

JR. GUARD: So. What's the big deal?

SNR. GUARD: The big deal is that she's been doing it once a month for a couple of months now. Then, each time, she waits about ten minutes for the hour, just reading a magazine, until she goes to the bathroom. Every time. ... What do you make of that?

JR. GUARD: That you might be voyeur.

SNR. GUARD: What do you know?

JR. GUARD: No. You're right. It is odd.

SNR. GUARD: I know. But something about her. The way she asked me. I felt like talking to her. Maybe ask her out.

JR. GUARD: Maybe you could write her a poem.

SNR. GUARD: ... You think this is a joke!

JR. GUARD: I'm totally serious. It could work. It's a very romantic thing to do. No one does it. No one in their right mind does it. I mean, writing a poem is not an insignificant affair. You know that.

SNR. GUARD: Ya. ... No. I won't do it. ... I'm not ready yet. ... I need more time. I'm too vulnerable.

JR. GUARD: Forget about it.

STRANGER and WOMAN are lying in her bed. She gets up from the bed dragging a sheet to cover herself and takes a candle and matches out from a small dresser by the door. During the scene she will light it and then light a cigarette with it.

STRANGER: Now. I'm trying to stay away from things. Just for a while. Sure, I'm not expecting anything from anyone. You can't. But whatever happens, I'm open. So we'll see. You can expect me to be too undemanding. That's what I've always had to be. ... Especially last year. Under all that shit I went through. Not much fun. Did you ever have a gun pointed to your face? (He sighs) They brought me in for questioning one day. I was sleeping. The t.v. was on. Some show where everyone was laughing. That's not important. I heard a knock on the door. Nothing disturbing.

SHE sits back down beside him. She gives him a cigarette. They smoke together.

YOUNG COP: Mister James Sand! Please open the door. We know that you're in there. Please, sir. We just need to ask a few questions. It won't take long...

OLD COP: You goddamn low life. Open the goddamn door before we goddamn break it down!

YOUNG COP: Let's do this in a civilized manner.

OLD COP: Let's just get the damn thing done, o.k.

YOUNG COP: Right. Sir, open the door please or we will have to use proper force. Do you understand, sir? You have five seconds to respond...or we will be forced to proceed.

OLD COP: One. Two. Three. Four. Five.

YOUNG COP: Six. Seven. Ei...

OLD COP: Fuck this shit.

We hear two gun shots and a door opening violently.

STRANGER: Hey. Hey. What is this?

OLD COP: Get up. Get up! You ugly fart!

STRANGER: What, what, what is this about? Do you have a warrant or a summons?

OLD COP: Shut up. ... We talk, you listen.

YOUNG COP: Mister Sand, we're not putting you under arrest. We've come here as officers of the peace. We have here a summons to bring you in for questioning. You do have the right to contest this summons by bringing in a lawyer. If you are unable to afford a lawyer, the crown will appoint one for you.

OLD COP: Alright, alright! Cut the goddamn crap, will ya. - Come on buddy.

YOUNG COP: Sir. Thank you. It is in your interest, Mister Sand, to yield to this summons and in so doing avoid the usual complicated fate that bureaucracy has designed for potential trouble makers such as yourself - Honestly speaking, sir, these days, the paper work is all entered on a database, the strict minimum, really. So, you really shouldn't worry too much about it. Still, it would be disagreeable for me aswell as for my superior colleague here present to leave here empty handed.

STRANGER: This is not a summons. A summons is used to inform someone of a court date.

OLD COP: This here date were taking you to is very important for your physical and spiritual well being. It would be in your best interest to sign on these fuck'n dotted lines and shut up. Understood? I would hate to have to here about an untimely suicide down a downtown building.

STRANGER: I wasn't handcuffed and in the car we got to chit-chat a little bit. They were tired of being police officers. Their real longing was litterature. Poetry. Especially the older cop. He recited a few poems by Beaudelaire. The wine poems. I'd never heard them.

OLD COP: The wine poems are not just about getting drunk. They're not just strokes of pen or simple forms of free expression that one might get through the intoxication of alcohol. They're about the celebration of moral, spiritual and social liberty. Freedom in its' most primal form. Also, you hafta understand the rigid social context in which they were written. Beaudelaire used a romantic form to express very modern ideas, old as the world. The human propencity to murder, to create havoc and all forms of madness as a result of survival, albeit subconscious and through periods of extreme drunkenness, in other words of great lucidity and consciousness.

YOUNG COP: 'S'that why you get all fucked up after every day after work?

OLD COP: Wait a minute. Let me finish.

YOUNG COP: How long do we hafta listen, professor?

OLD COP: Shut up. For god's sake, what do you know? You're just a young prick still full of brainwashed ideas shot into you at the academy. Let me finish.

YOUNG COP: No, no. I'll tell you one thing or two about Beaudelaire. The wine poems are just cryptic and fantastic poems written on sad nights by an androgenous poet who had way to many social diseases, including, alienation, - listen to me - alcoholism, urban paranoia and a hightened superiority complex. Not to mention he was constanstantly bruched aside by the mainstream literary crowd. I mean, jesus, the wine poems are not poems you can related. They're illuminated social fiction. Writings for the writers. Not

for you or for me. That's all I have to say. I mean for fuck sake, the guy died his hair green

STRANGER: For a minute there I was impressed. They might treat me well. Use humanity, not savagery. ... When we arrived at the police station. A small building in a neighborhood in the north end. A few kids were hanging on the streets. Old people were walking about. I think I heard a church bell resound. A few cops were coming in and out of the building. I waited for them to get out of the car and escort me into the building but they didn't move. The turned the engine off and the younger cop took out a cassette. Edith Piaf's voice began singing loudly through the speakers. The older cop got out of the car and opened one of the backdoor. He sat down beside me. I wasn't handcuffed but I felt fear around me like sunlight. Under the music he began insulting me and punching me hard in the stomach. He was a stocky man and he invaded me with his big arms, belly and head. He pounded until I fell back, lying down on the back seat. He took out a handkerchief and wiped his sweaty brow. His eyes were red. Before escorting me out he said :

OLD COP: You highly recommend "Le Vin de l'Assassin". You'll love it.

YOUNG COP: Come on! Haven't got all day.

STRANGER: In the precinct.

YOUNG COP: State your name, place and date of birth, current address and telephone number.

STRANGER: Number One, Subject.

YOUNG COP: Come on.

STRANGER: That's it.

YOUNG COP: DON'T FUCK WITH ME!!

OLD COP: Listen, young man. If you're refusing to cooperate...we'll have no choice but to use the necessary force it requires to achieve what we have all come here for.... Say something.

YOUNG COP: You asked for it.

STRANGER: They covered my face with a blanket. Strapped ducktape around so that it wouldn't slip off.

WOMAN: I don't wanna know. ... I can feel what's coming. I'm sorry. ... are you alright?

STRANGER: I'll be fine. It's the past. ... I'll survive. ... Your beautiful. Hold me.

WOMAN: Yes. Hold me. ... Where did you come from? You're wonderful man.

STRANGER: Don't say that. ... I mean, let's just be silent. I want to listen to your heartbeat. Feel your skin against mine. ... Lie here ... with you.

STRANGER is in the apartment. Both MAN and WOMAN are watching him from their rooms.

STRANGER: I had a bunch of friends. More than friends. A community. But I had no choice. There were forces stronger than all of us combined. They got us in such a way that we were powerless. I think a lot about all that - Still. ...When I got out of the hospital... - I had an arm in a cast and my face was all bruised up - the doctors wanted someone to come and pick me up, just to be on the safe side. I had to leave. I couldn't stand letting all the shit go down without me being there. I needed to be back with my friends. I walked out of the hospital when the nurses aid wasn't looking and hailed a cab. I didn't have any money. I wasn't yet sure where I was going. No destination, no address. Have you ever been desperate enough to just get the fuck away? Say at three in the morning, half asleep, but so completely lucid that you'll end up doing something that you would have never done otherwise. I felt like that. Like I couldn't blink or no words would be able to come out of my mouth. I told the cab driver to drive towards the East End, to deal with first things first, that once there I'd tell him where to go. The man was one of those old ones whose been a cab driver all his life, like he knows the city as well as the tip of his nose. He was there fast and as we got closer, - we were in the neighborhood most of my friends lived in - I told the driver to ride around the neighborhood. ... It was really weird. Smoke. Noises. Not the usual ones. Horrible noises. Screaming. I couldn't believe the things I was seeing. They were everywhere. I'd never seen so many. No one could do anything. I felt weak. My gut was telling me to go out there and face those goddamn fuck'n murderers. My head was just watching through the frame of the windows, closing out what was unwatchable, describing things to my heart as if they were foreign to me, actions going on in a cage. I'd seen things like these on t.v., in newspapers. It scarred the shit out of me. For a second, I sort of regretted not staying at the hospital. I felt like a coward. ... I felt like a thief. The cab stopped at a red light. I told the old man to stop the meter, " this is fine". I looked around outside the car and I knew what had to be done. I read the meter. " Oh, shit. Listen, pal, I hate to do this, but do you mind if I go up here, up this apartment building and get the money I need to pay you? Here, I'll leave you my driver's licence...and my keys. Yes?... I'll be down in a sec." Clang. The door shut. The old man was still watching me as I walked in through the door of the apartment building. Furious. I know how he felt. Poor man. Forty-five dollars and thirty cents. I went straight up to Number one's apartment. He was ready for me and we hugged and talked. He told me who had gone down, who was left. What they thought had to be done. The Main Office had disappeared. There hadn't been any word from them in 24 hours. That meant they were out of the picture. We'd been abandoned, so to speak. It was nerve wracking, to not have any orders to follow. It felt like freedom as well as chaos. Number One told me that he knew where the Director might be and that he might be able to tell us what to do. It was the best plan. We carefully left the building. The sound of buzzing and gunshots. Distant screams. Things got closer as we reached the main floor. I told Number One I had to pay the cab. He didn't say a word. He followed to the taxi, watching everything in sight as he leaned into the driver's window and shot two bullets into his head. I watched the blood spill out into the car. Number one opened the car door, dragged the man out, sat in the pool of blood and turned the ignition key. I ran into car and stayed silent. Number One was not smiling or saying a word. He fixed the rearview mirror and turned on the radio. There was country music playing.

GUARDS are each sitting in their own beds.

JR. GUARD: I can't explain what's going on. It's as if i'm possessed. I can't think straight. I've getting to work late. I let two little punks walk away without even giving them a warning. Contemptuous little thieves. Every night...

SNR. GUARD: It's the same routine. I go to sleep and I forget that I'm doing it alone. Talk about pathetic. I wish she were still there snoring like a goddamn storm. She used to take up all the sheets and I'd hafta grab them to settle in. For ten years, we didn't have sex. Maybe a few times here and there. Just to remember what it was like. A quarter to twelve.

JR. GUARD: Every night I think I'll resist. What can I say, it makes me feel like a pervert. But lately it's been too hard. thinking about that woman from the ladies bathroom. So I just masturbate and get it over with.

SNR. GUARD: That woman came by again this month. She always comes by and makes small talk.

JR. GUARD: Maybe she's shy and she doesn't know how to approach me. It happened once. One of the girls who worked in the Donut Shop. I dated her for three weeks. I'll see what happens.

SNR. GUARD: You can't rush these things. Women need time. They're very sensitive creatures. ... Did I forget to switch on the alarm.

JR. GUARD: Is that noise coming from outside. Oh, no, it's the fridge.

GUARDS fall asleep.

MAN's room. STRANGER and MAN are sitting on the floor and smoking cigarettes. MAN starts to cough and then laugh. STRANGER smiles at him. We hear someone walking around in the apartment. STRANGER puts his index finger to his mouth in a sign to not make a sound. The main area of the stage is barely lit, but enough to see WOMAN walking around the apartment. MAN, puzzled, looks at STRANGER who gets up to close the door. WOMAN returns to her room.

MAN: You didn't answer my question.

STRANGER: My job? I told you, didn't I?

MAN: But what did you study?

STRANGER: I was gonna be an insurance salesman. That's what my father did.

MAN: That's quite possible. I mean, you don't look like one. But when you were younger...

STRANGER: I quit my school after a year.

MAN: What kind of insurance?

STRANGER: Well. I'm not exactly an insurance. I would have offered advice. You know, ort of like a bank. We'd use the term insurance salesman because it was less complicated to explain.

MAN: You're not obligated to explain.

STRANGER: Not many people have asked me.

MAN: May I ask you another question? Would you have worked for a consulting firm or some other type of...?

STRANGER: No. I wanted to work for a special company. Where my dad worked. They we're based in the caribbean. In Guyana. It's so beautiful down there.

MAN: You've been down there?

STRANGER: A few times. When I was kid. My dad brought us on conferences and once on a paid vacation.

MAN: Wow. It sounds so exciting. ... But why? Why did you get involved in that?

STRANGER: You're a beautiful man.

MAN: Excuse me.

STRANGER: I'm changing the subject. ... It's something about your face. A sweet charm. It's lovely. ... I just made a compliment. You're supposed to thank me. ... Never mind. Don't mind me. I'm feeling kind of funny tonight. ... Has a man ever made a pass at you?

MAN: No. Not that I can recall. ...

STRANGER: What do you think?

MAN: About what?

STRANGER: Does it make you nervous?

MAN: Yes. I guess so.

STRANGER approaches MAN and kisses him. MAN closes his eyes and receives the kiss. STRANGER caresses MAN and continues kissing on the face. MAN begins to put his arms around STRANGER. They embrace until they fall on the bed and very slowly begin to undress.

WOMAN is alone, in her room. She is slowly applying make-up.

WOMAN: My dad was getting cranky. He didn't understand how I could be going out on a night like this. "The strongest blizzard in two years. You're out of your goddamn mind." "And your losing your mind dad." "Not yet. Give us a decade or two." T'was snowing. Like the tv wasn't working. The radio said it was gonna be freezing. My boyfriend said it was gonna be fine. When he picked me up, his pick up truck was warm and he kissed me softly. Like a snow flake. "Tonight there's a party at Jim's." Jim is my boyfriend's best friend, since elementary. I liked Craig, my boyfriend, he was studying to be a carpenter. He's also in the construction business. Helps his dad whose a brick layer. ... The snow made straight white fluffy lines if you stared at them from inside the truck. Craig likes classical music. He always puts on the state funded radio. Says it comes from his mother's side. "A straight razor, with two feet on the ground and the wise as hell to boot." He loves talking about her. She died, you see. Not that long ago. Craig's a sentimental. I'd hate to see his rough side. I doubt I will. He keeps it all in and stays gentle. He says his dad doesn't talk about it. They fight about whether to talk about it or not. My dad talks too much. Nothing's a secret with him. And everything's a joke.

"Those condoms, Craig, if they break, we'll sue, eh?!" Craig gets all red and says "sure" or "ya" "see you later". Jim's got his own house. Belonged to his grand mother, but she died when Jim was a teenager and he was her favourite grandchild. He decorates the place like a real jock. There's a pool table in the dining room and the walls are covered with hockey and football teams him and his brothers were part of. Jim's got cable, so, at parties, all the guys sit around the tv and watch the football or the hockey league games. I never get along really with the other girlfriends. So I've become pretty good at pool. ... Craig was wondering about marriage. After the party, he said it might be something we could talk about, maybe just a little. But I keep thinking about my note book waiting for me in my room. I sometimes light a candle but my dad smells it right away and he's paranoid about fires. I read a little and then jot down anything that's traveling in my head. Anything.

In another dark room, there are three chairs and a small table in the center with a pack of cigarettes, matches and an ashtray. The lights in the room are off. The DIRECTOR is seated in one of them. He is biting his lips and looking around nervously.

DIRECTOR: If I am right, I have two days left in me. Not naturally of course. In that perspective, I'm fit as a mule. Ugly, old and stubborn mule.

NUMBER ONE and TWO enter quietly. They see the DIRECTOR and quietly sit down.

DIRECTOR: Turn the lights on, for god sakes, I can't see a thing!

NUMBER TWO gets up, turns the lights on and sits back down.

DIRECTOR: Thank you for coming. I was only waiting for you. ... Freedom is something gained by circumstance, wise decision making, inherit intuition and skill, natural or acquired. The Main Office has eyes to see who is best fit to be given that gift. A privilege. Look upon it as royalty. Royalty under the name of Type Two Numbers, i.e. Autonomous Numbers. These are the highest members of this team, this organisation. Their purposes are very secret but awed at and highly revered by those in higher ranks such as myself. A Type Two is protected with the utmost respect and honour. ... Number One and Two, when a Type Two is killed, the Main Office brings it upon itself to venge that death no matter what the nature, cause or circumstance was. ... I have here, an explicit order by the Main Office to eliminate you, Number One and to severely chastise you, Number Two. You have no choice but to yield to these orders. If you decide to defy these orders, your penalties will highten. ... I am deeply sorry. There is no excuse for having made such a mistake. I hope you find it in your hearts to forgive me.

DIRECTOR, NUMBER ONE and TWO are in the dark room.

DIRECTOR: I have not done my job. I have been slipping ever so slowly. But believe me, I did not know this would happen. ... This goddamn war has consumed me. I am an animal unable to be anything else. I can't smile or laugh genuinely. I can not be with any one intimately. ... Are you two listening? ... I am a fraud of a man. ... Do you know what they want. For my sins, they want me kill myself. Because of that stupid room number! Fuck them! Fuck the lot of them and they're nostalgic war from hell!! I hate them all. I hate myself.

NUMBER ONE reaches for his gun

DIRECTOR: I can't do it. I'm a coward. A small nervous coward. I would shit in my pants and pee and what if I wasn't dead, I might fall into a coma - a vegetable for the rest of my years.

NUMBER ONE points the gun to the DIRECTOR's head and shoots

In the street, NUMBER ONE and TWO are walking fast.

NUMBER TWO: What are we gonna do now.

NUMBER ONE: There's no more we.

NUMBER TWO: What? *(They stop)* Hey, listen. We work together.

NUMBER ONE: This whole thing is ridiculous. We have nothing to do with any of it.

NUMBER TWO: This is all we know. We've done this for too long. How can you expect to change? Where are gonna go.

NUMBER ONE: Far from all of this.

NUMBER TWO: You're betraying us.

NUMBER ONE: Think about what you're saying. It doesn't make any sense. You don't know what you're talking about. ... You know you want out. You too. I've seen how you look. You're fuck'n desperate to do something else. To love a woman. To make love to a woman.

NUMBER TWO: Don't you start telling me about women!

NUMBER ONE: Shut up. ... I'm gonna betray this whole fucking lie and get a life. *(He walks away)*

NUMBER TWO: Number One, I won't be able to forgive you!

NUMBER ONE: Don't worry! I don't give a flying fuck! ... I'm gonna become a civilian!

STRANGER and MAN are lying in MAN's bed. STRANGER gets up and walks to the bathroom which is filled with steam. He starts to hum and pours vases of hot water that are on the floor into the tub. When the tub is full he slowly gets into the bath tub. He washes himself, humming all the while.

STRANGER is sitting at the couch, watching tv. It is dawn. He holds a dozen long stemmed roses. EX-LOVER walks in. He gets up and walks towards her as she stares at him with disdain.

EX-LOVER: Oh, yes, the paranoid schyzophrenic. ... Oh, hello!

STRANGER: Hello. Welcome home. I wanted to thank you ... *(he hands her the roses)*

EX-LOVER: Very nice. - What were you doing with that slut?! Did you by any chance go into her room?

STRANGER: What... what are...?

EX-LOVER: Do you know what you are?

STRANGER: Look, I have a surprise for you. *(He takes out a bottle of champagne from under the sofa)* It's to thank you for your hospitality.

EX-LOVER: Oh. ... Very well. Go get some glasses.

STRANGER: Yes. Right away. *(He leaves, comes back with glasses and starts uncorking the bottle)* ... I always have a bit of a ...

EX-LOVER: Here. Let me do that! *(She uncorks it. It pops.)* Go ahead. Serve. *(He serves)*

STRANGER: Here's to...!

EX-LOVER: No, let me. Please. I would like to make a toast to someone who is now assuredly and completely, as of this moment, totally out of my life. You, sir. For your pathetic attempts at rendering yourself glorious with your ugly and ridiculous lies. ... Tell me. How does it feel to be here while your friends are back home dying? And mister strangeness here is frolocking about with the bitch upstairs and the geek over there. How does it feel to know that your loved one was tortured and your bestfriend was left in the countryside to rot!!...

STRANGER: No. Don't. *(STRANGER puts his hand on EX-LOVER's mouth)* Please. Stop...

EX-LOVER: Don't we have a nice time, coming around here and fucking with people's minds! Here's to you! You little youo slut! *(she grabs him by the waist)* I hope you two had good humping times. Tell me, did she took total advantage of your tiny friend! *(She throws her glass to the floor)*

STRANGER starts to cry.

EX-LOVER: Ya, that's it. Cry for the dead you've left behind. ... I hope you never set foot in my life again. Your mere presence is nauseating...

STRANGER is lying on EX-LOVER's bed wearing her bathrobe. He wakes up abruptly from a nightmare. The lights are all on in the apartment. MAN and WOMAN are sleeping in their own bed's. EX-LOVER walks into the apartment. She looks around, places STRANGER's wallet on the library goes into the kitchen then heads to her room.

STRANGER is in the dark room, he is finishing polishing his shoes. The bed is made, the guns are placed on the table. The room looks clean. He takes a comb out of his pocket and combs his hair. Neatly, he puts the comb back. He picks up his trenchcoat and his hat, which are lying on the bed, and goes to squat in front of the tv.

STRANGER: Hey. ... Come on. You're not gonna say goodbye. ... At least look at me.

TV: *(sad)* Click. *(it turns on by itself)* What do you want again?

STRANGER: They're gonna be coming here. They'll probably burn the building. I'm gonna leave you outside. ... I'm gonna miss you like you wouldn't believe. ... Your my best friend. ... Everything's going to pieces around me. I don't know where to stand. ... I believed in this whole thing. Fighting for the past. VICTORIA. I loved my collaborators. ... All my friends have sunken into the fire and yet I stand to walk away uncomsumed. I have had days where I cried that were happier than this day. ... there's nothing I can do.

TV: Just go, Number Two. It is the best thing. ... I want you to leave me here. I was new when I got here. I don't want to know anywhere else.

STRANGER looks at the tv, then unplugs it, picks it up and carries it with him. Outside, he leaves it the entrance of an alley. He walks on, tightening the trenchcoat and quickening his pace, we can see that he is heading towards the train

EX-LOVER wakes up. A strong late morning sun shines through her window. She immediately notices a note by her pillow. She reads it.

STRANGER: *(voice)* When you read this letter, I will be gone. My old city is where I belong. Perhaps not for the better, but that is so. I had a wonderful night. You are all beautiful lovers. I know that you will one day soon meet someone who will care for you as I did not have the strength to do. Wish me good luck back home. There are many evils there for me to battle. Remember, you are wonderful lovers. I will not forget you in the least. Your friend, always.

EX-LOVER lies in her bed, staring at the letter.

NARRATION: Stranger walks on a bridge. The day time sun shines brightly to the west. He is content and walks in a determined pace.

STRANGER: I will never forget my experiences with those two people. The friendship that we had. In of all places that city. And as I continued my road I could only feel hope in me as I remembered the striking memory of those betrayed, butchered and murdered.

NARATOR: Stranger is standing on the platform of a train station, he is motionless, staring out into the distance.

VOICE 1: Seagulls fly all the way there.

VOICE 2: The stranger thinks that they see the station as a poem.

VOICE 3: And that they are simply an image they have lent themselves to.

VOICE 4: The detail in which this image is described in his head...

VOICE 1: Leaves the stranger baffled for words.

VOICE 2: On the platform there are foot prints he has formed from his shoes.

VOICE 3: The black and white train station echoes in his breathing.

VOICE 4: He thinks that perhaps all this observing is sufficient.

VOICE 1: When he sees families and lovers board and exit the trains though...

VOICE 2: He can not be sure.

VOICE 3: He is estranged.

VOICE 4: But the fog is suspended by his eyes.

VOICE 1: When he is completely silent...

VOICE 2: And everything else is gone...

VOICE 3: He suspects no one...

VOICE 4: As if nothing has happened.

NUMBER TWO continues walking. By a gutter he spots a pigeon lying on the floor. He bends down to look closer.

NUMBER TWO: You're all bruised up. What happened to you? ... A car hit you. Don't worry little guy. It'll be alright. ... I'll call to someone to help you. Who can I call? I'm sure there's someone I can call. ... But you hang in there and everything'll be alright. ... In the meantime, do you need anything? Is there anything I can get for you? I don't know...maybe - You're not breathing much. *(He tries to find the pigeons heartbeat)* ... I can't hear anything. Are you, is your heart beating. ... Don't just stare at me. Do something. ... I shouldn't just let you die. Maybe you're suffering too much. You shouldn't be suffering - Wait! No, don't. ... You closed your eyes. Oh, no. What does that mean? That's not good. Shit! Are you dying on me? Tell me you're not dying on me. Say something. It's gonna be alright, just say something. Anything. Chirp or something. Just make a noise for fuck sake! ... Don't die one me. You're gonna be alright. ... Shit. You're not moving. Fuck! Shit! You're gonna fuck'n die on me. YOU COCK SUCKER! DON'T YOU DARE DIE ON ME! ... Don't you dare. Please. Don't. *(He starts to cry)*

The End.