

STATE OF EMERGENCY

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Characters

WOMAN

MAN

BOY

WOMAN Look

MAN Yes?

WOMAN Are you alright?

MAN *Short pause* Yes

WOMAN ...everything's alright, I mean... you?

MAN What? Yeah, sure

WOMAN You're...

MAN What? Yes

WOMAN Is everything ok with

MAN With me you mean? Yeah.

WOMAN You're sure?

MAN What?

WOMAN Are you sure?

MAN Yes

WOMAN quite sure

MAN *Short pause* What? Yes

WOMAN Uh-huh

MAN Yes

WOMAN So there's nothing?

MAN What? No

WOMAN Nothing

MAN What's supposed to be, no

WOMAN Everything's ok?

MAN What?

WOMAN With you?

MAN Yes

WOMAN Good

MAN Yes

WOMAN Uh-huh
Pause.
Come here

MAN What is it?

WOMAN Just come here

MAN I'm right next to you

WOMAN No, come... closer

MAN Yes

WOMAN Look at me

MAN What is it?

WOMAN Just look at me
He does this
What is it?

MAN What?

WOMAN What's wrong?

MAN Leave me

WOMAN No, look at me

MAN Yes

WOMAN That look, something's... I don't know what it
is but... something's...

MAN No it's not

WOMAN Different

MAN What?

WOMAN Different, about you... something's different

MAN No

WOMAN There's something different

MAN About me, no, nothing's different

WOMAN You sure?

MAN What?

WOMAN Are you sure about that?

MAN Me?

WOMAN Look at me again
The MAN does it.
Everything's

MAN What?

WOMAN Everything's as it should be?

MAN Yes, of course

WOMAN Everything's just as it should be?

MAN Everything's just as it should be

WOMAN 'S not very convincing the way you say it,
say it again

MAN Everything's fine, everything's just,
everything's

WOMAN I'm worried

MAN There's no need

WOMAN I'm worried about you

MAN Don't be
Short pause.

WOMAN Can you hear... shooting?

MAN What?

WOMAN I thought it had stopped but
Short pause
no, it's getting closer, every day and I
She stops, a faint noise can be heard, the
man holds his temples, the woman listens
very precisely to the noise.
Shooting.

MAN No

WOMAN You can't hear it?

MAN *uncertain* No, it's quiet here... isn't it?

WOMAN Is something burning? Is that something
burning? It's... right here in the
neighbourhood, isn't it?

MAN No

WOMAN It's getting closer all the time
Short pause, the sound of waves can be
heard.

MAN That's nice

WOMAN Now they're playing that noise again, that
means that...

MAN No

WOMAN Yes, it does, it means... when they play the
waves, then they're doing that so we can't
hear the screams, the gunshots because
someone somewhere's gone and tried again to

MAN No people say that but it's not true
Laughs.
They really are waves

WOMAN So where's the sea then?

Short pause

If they play the sound of waves, then

MAN They do it because it sounds nice, it's soothing, because it's beautiful, because the sun's going down and it fits... we haven't got a sea, but they'll build us one here soon, it's just a question of money and... whether they get permission to relocate

WOMAN We're not safe here any more are we?

MAN Yes we are

WOMAN At night people get over the walls or someone's letting them in... someone here in the complex is leaving the gate open at night and

MAN Shhhh, come on, let's just listen to the waves for a bit and

WOMAN Look at me

MAN Yes

WOMAN Look at my face

MAN I am

WOMAN Properly
He looks at her.
It's not you, is it?

MAN What?

WOMAN Who's leaving the gate open at night?

MAN Me?

WOMAN I'm not sure any more

MAN Me?

WOMAN Somebody here, here in the complex, that's what they're saying, somebody... apparently people get in through the sewers or let

themselves be thrown in from above, I don't know, that's what they're saying, nobody's saying it officially but... the gun shots, I am not imagining those am I and.. at night people go sneaking round the buildings, it didn't used to be like that, can nobody sleep or are they really people from outside, but how are they doing it, how are they getting in here, there's got to be somebody, that's what they're saying, somebody, who... we're not safe here any more... are YOU leaving the gate open? You're not doing that are you? You're not. I don't know... I've been sleeping so badly recently, and the pills, they're... they're not helping, but I... I can't keep on going back asking for more, that... I can't, it would be noticed, there would be talk, then the company would find out and, we're not supposed to be afraid, we aren't, I don't want to be either, I WANT not to be afraid, but... you're... there's something... about
Short pause.

... you and... I'm having such... weird dreams all the time now, I... can see you at night and... but I know... I'm not dreaming, it doesn't feel like a dream because when I wake up and look beside me... you're not there or... no... you're there but you're not you or you're another man who looks like you but isn't you, not like you used to be when... is everything ok with you?

MAN With me? Yeah

WOMAN Nothing's changed?

MAN No

WOMAN I just thought, because you, it feels

MAN Calm down, everything's fine
He kisses her.

WOMAN It's odd

MAN What is?

WOMAN You kiss differently

MAN What?

WOMAN It's not like you. Something's... different...
I don't know, but

MAN *kisses her again* Everything's fine,
everything's just as it should be, I'm not

WOMAN Different, but you are

MAN I'm not

WOMAN I can tell, something's going on inside you...
but what? What exactly is it? Where's my
husband? Where is he? I can't find him any
more, when I look at you, I
Short pause.
D'you notice that? It's so quiet suddenly,
first there's shooting, then the waves and
then complete silence, listen...

MAN It's not shooting, it's kids playing

WOMAN Uh-huh, so what are they playing then?

MAN I don't know, they

WOMAN And why are they hanging from the fence at
five in the morning with their eyes wide
open? What's that game called?

MAN I don't know, they're accidents, it happens
every now and again, it...

WOMAN Silence can you hear

MAN They ought to build a sea then we'd be safe

WOMAN Then they'll swim across and... I climbed up
on the roof yesterday

MAN You did what?

WOMAN I climbed up on the roof

MAN That's not really... on, is it?

WOMAN It was five in the morning and I looked over
at the other side

MAN Oh yes?

WOMAN Do you know at night this place is teeming
with people

MAN Teeming?

WOMAN None of them can sleep, they all walk the
streets

MAN Maybe they're shadows, shadows of the trees

WOMAN Trees don't run away when you throw stones
at them.

MAN You did... what?

WOMAN I saw you

MAN Me?

WOMAN Yes, you... running around, on the other side,
you wanted to get our car out of there but
you couldn't find it... you were running round
outside the gate, on your own, looking for
the car but you didn't find it, it had been
torched, all the cars had been torched, and
you were looking but the burnt out corpses
of the torched cars all looked the same and
you'd forgotten where you'd parked it or
whether you even HAD parked it, you couldn't
remember anything any more, not a thing, you
were running around in the dark and you
wanted to get back in but you'd forgotten
the code and then you ran round in circles
between the burning cars and screamed, just
screamed

MAN Uh-huh

MAN Me

WOMAN Something's not right with you, you
Pause.
Are you leaving the gate open at night? Is
it you?

MAN No, I

WOMAN I listen to you

MAN You do what?

WOMAN You talk

MAN Oh yeah?

WOMAN In your sleep

MAN Uh-huh

WOMAN You talk in your sleep

MAN Uh-huh
Pause.

WOMAN What are you talking about?

MAN What?

WOMAN WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, I WANT TO KNOW,
WHAT?

MAN What am I talking about then?

WOMAN DON'T YOU KNOW? Arrgh, something... I can
hear that noise again, I... why are you doing
this? Why are you putting everything at
risk? Suddenly now after all these years
we've
Pause, he looks at her
the way you're looking at me now
Short pause
that's how you look at me every night

MAN When?

WOMAN

You wake up for a fraction of a second and look at me, very briefly, like you are now... in panic... like you want to run away... I lie awake... at night... and watch you sleeping, I lie awake and listen to you breathing... I do it every night... night after night... I watch you... your breathing seems to get louder and louder, like a roaring, a screaming, a... I don't know, OWW, I'm so close to you and... where are you trying to run to? ... you rock back and forth, sometimes you scream, not for long, YOU SCREAM, don't you realise, you must realise, you suddenly scream, grab hold of me and then... I lie awake watching you because I want to understand, I want to understand but OW this roaring noise, am I the only one who can hear it? I watch you, I watch you sleeping or pretending to sleep, you're dreaming about something, and in your dreams you're wandering around, wandering on the other side of the fence, talking to the people there, getting lost behind the rubbish tips, lying down in the snow and laughing, you're lying there with your eyes closed and laughing... such a strange... laugh... it's coming out of you... at night... and you're talking, talking in your sleep... where... where are you? where are you then? at night? where are you then? where? that's what I want to know, where?

MAN

uncertain I'm with right you

WOMAN

No

MAN

I am totally and utterly with you, I... what am I supposed to... I mean, where... what?

WOMAN

You hold onto me and scream... I want to give you everything you need, but... what am I supposed to do, I... where's my husband gone, where is he? What have you done with him? WHERE IS HE? I WANT MY HUSBAND BACK, what have you done with him, where is he, where?

MAN

cautiously I am here

WOMAN No

MAN Yes, I'm

WOMAN No, you're not, you are not, that is not...
and that is why I thought

MAN What?

WOMAN I thought that... it would be better if... it
might be better

MAN No

WOMAN Better if I

MAN No

WOMAN Purely to help you I mean, if I, if I... if I
were to tell them

MAN No

WOMAN So that they could check

MAN What? No

WOMAN Check to see if everything's alright with
you

MAN No

WOMAN It might be something chemical... your
magnesium levels aren't right, there's
something... your blood levels or... I just
thought, maybe

MAN No, my levels are fine.

WOMAN And you've had them tested?

MAN Yes

WOMAN Have you?

MAN Yes
Short pause.

WOMAN What about more sport?

MAN What about it?

WOMAN Didn't you have to do more sport?

MAN Me?

WOMAN Get out in the evenings, go for a walk round
the lake with the dog.
Short pause.

MAN We haven't got a dog

WOMAN Then we'll hire one, you can hire things
like that here, or we'll order one, then

MAN No, I don't want a dog.

WOMAN Or you could dig in the garden with the
neighbours

MAN That's... there are people employed to do
that... that's not planned, for us to go round
digging up the garden, if everyone did that,
then

WOMAN Hold me tight

MAN What?

WOMAN Hold me tight, please

MAN *hugs her for a while* Is that good?
Short pause.

WOMAN We can tell each other everything, we don't
need to keep any secrets from one another,
do we? We don't need to

MAN No

WOMAN If something wasn't right then we would tell
each other, wouldn't we?

MAN Yes

WOMAN If a time comes when you don't want to have sex with me, you just don't fancy me, then... you don't have to

MAN But I want to, I mean, I like doing that, so, I...

WOMAN Yes?

MAN No, that's... fine, that's what we agreed, once a fortnight

WOMAN You don't have to if it's too much bother.

MAN But it's not too much bother, I mean, it's... no, once a fortnight... We need that too, I mean, we... you do too, don't you?

WOMAN It's ok if you miss the odd one, honestly... take a break and... I can do without it for a month or two, that's fine... I mean... there are people who NEVER

MAN Stop it

WOMAN They just come home and stare at the ceiling
Short pause.
Compared with that what we've got here is beautiful, desirable, enviable... I mean there are people who just lie around and shout all day or bang their heads on the ceiling or THEY KEEP wanking, wanking and wanking and wanking till they're so empty and wrung out they reach a state of stupidity where they keep running into the door without ever finding a way out, THEY DO IT OVER AND OVER AGAIN, by those standards we've got a great life, haven't we, eh?
The MAN has closed his eyes as if he's gone to sleep, he tries to breathe evenly.
Darling.
Short pause.
Love.

Short pause, very tender I understand,
other couples don't have sex, we work... we do
a lot of work, so... so we don't always have
to have sex with each other

The MAN says nothing.

I think it's ok for you to come home and not
want to talk to me, if you just sit down and
don't look at me, don't touch me... don't talk
to me

MAN But I do

WOMAN You don't notice

MAN I

WOMAN 'Cause you're not here

MAN I

WOMAN On some endlessly long sheet of ice
somewhere... somewhere in the Arctic a group
of young polar bears are searching for food...
suddenly the ice breaks and they all plunge
down three thousand metres into the depths
and drown... you can hear their screams for
days while they're drowning, while the sun
slowly eats away their brains

Pause.

That was on tv yesterday.

MAN A documentary?

WOMAN On the news.

Pause.

Look... it's ok, if you don't think about me
or...my body, sure, I mean I understand... I am
over 40... and by that time your body

MAN Stop it

WOMAN No, no, I understand, I understand... my
body's

Rather forced laughter.

And yours, well, yours is

*She strokes his body, takes a close look at
a couple of places and laughs.*

It gets to be like that eventually, it's not a bad thing, we'll deal with it, you know, course we will

Pause.

It's just, it's just... you don't have to be happy with me, and you don't have to make me happy, that's ok, I really don't have such high... in that area but... you should..

Short pause.

... go to work

MAN What?

WOMAN Because if you don't do that... if you show the same kind of attitude there as you do here, then

MAN Me? No, how

WOMAN I just think you ought to go back

MAN But I'm there

WOMAN Your body's there

MAN What?

WOMAN You're not present and... they can tell... there's something missing... you're no fun.

Pause.

It's alright, if you find that somewhere else, not here, not with me, after all this time no-one's expecting a lot of action in that department, that's fine, but... but, can I say this one thing, as a 'friend' or whatever you want to call it: get yourself what you need to keep on working, get it... so you... so... you've got to work, you've got to be good, you understand what I mean?

MAN Yes

WOMAN They rang up

MAN Uh-huh

WOMAN They rang me up and asked about you

MAN Did they?

WOMAN Whether everything's alright, they're worried, they're all really worried about you.

MAN Really?

WOMAN Yes, all of them, the management, the team, the lot

MAN Uh-huh

WOMAN They're all really worried about you... and about me, they're asking how I can have let this happen that you, let you become so different, you're so absent, they want to know where you get to in this absence of yours, what you're thinking, they're asking me for clues because none of them can make any sense of your behaviour, it's so unusual, like something happened... they... they've asked me, not to leave you to your own devices, to take responsibility

MAN Uh-huh

WOMAN You're so passive

MAN But I

WOMAN You're getting left behind

MAN No

WOMAN You're not achieving

MAN What, of course, I

WOMAN Your performance is down

MAN No

WOMAN That's what they're saying

MAN That's not true, I'm doing everything just like I... like I always do

WOMAN But something's different

MAN No

WOMAN Your performance is down, they've measured it

MAN That can't be true

WOMAN It is

MAN No

WOMAN And they want to know why

MAN I do everything they way I've always, I get just as much done as before

WOMAN But you're not enjoying it
Short pause
It's no fun any more, you've fallen out of love... with the job and that's... they can tell and they're wondering why, because the job's still the same so it would seem to be something with you

MAN I do enjoy it

WOMAN And they want to know what can be done

MAN I enjoy doing it

WOMAN They've had a couple of meetings about it with the team, individual interviews and... and here in the complex, they've talked to the neighbours... they've looked at your video analysis, all your stats for the last fifteen years.
Short pause.

MAN What?

WOMAN They say you hardly laugh any more, you... don't enjoy the job any more, you do the

work... hesitantly and look out of the window a lot, three or four minutes an hour on average. And increasing.

Short pause.

What are you looking for?

MAN

I

WOMAN

The others don't like to be in the same room as you, late at night you seem... tired... you're always the last one to leave the office but what are you doing there? Your scores are falling... what are you doing there so late if you're not working, what? When you all go away at weekends or just go out for a drink together... no one wants to sit next to you, when they put together new teams, nobody wants you on their team, nobody, you don't really engage in conversations... it's like it's not really you who's talking, it's like you're... somewhere else... and the clients can tell, the clients... the clients don't want appointments with you, you've got fewer appointments

MAN

That is not

WOMAN

3.45 per cent less than last month

Pause.

4.13 per cent less than the month before, you're dropping back, soon... soon you won't exist any more, the numbers... are against you... you don't convince the clients any more, because... because... what is it? What's wrong, what?

Pause.

...like you're... somewhere else and where you are exactly that's something they'd like to know... they really want to know that.

Pause, very softly Where are you?

Short pause, normal volume You don't tell jokes any more, you used to really enjoy telling jokes, why don't you do it any more?

MAN

uncertain I do

WOMAN *produces a piece of paper with diagrams on it and checks* 17 per cent down on last month. 23 per cent down on the same month last year.

MAN I

WOMAN you'd tell people about yourself, your life, stories, anecdotes, or if there was something you'd enjoyed in one of the shows you'd act it out, imitating the candidates or someone stumbling... they'd all laugh, they thought it was... funny... it cheered them up, gave them so much strength they really wanted to be with you, get through the day together with you, but... why not, why don't you do that any more?

MAN But I

WOMAN No

MAN I

WOMAN Tell me a joke then

MAN What? No

WOMAN Come on

MAN Now?

WOMAN Yes
Long pause, he starts but breaks off after the first word.

MAN This man goes into
Breaks off, short pause.
This

WOMAN And you'd sing

MAN What?

WOMAN Before you used to... sing when you were at work and... now you don't any more

MAN Yes I

WOMAN Sing then

MAN No

WOMAN Sing

MAN Now?

WOMAN Yes
The MAN hums something softly, then stops.

MAN I

WOMAN Come on, let's sing together

MAN Leave me

WOMAN No, come on, let's practice

MAN Leave me alone, can't we go... and eat or something

WOMAN *starts singing* I want to live
Waits for him to sing the second line and when he doesn't she carries on singing.
I want to give
Waits for him.
Come on.

MAN I've been a miner for a heart of gold

WOMAN You missed several awaydays, where were you?

MAN I was there

WOMAN No you weren't

MAN Why do you believe that?

WOMAN I KNOW, they called me, they... I know. *She flicks through a series of papers.* I know all about it, for God's sake, have you any idea what you're doing... I'm going to have to leave here too if you... you can't do it any more, if you can't get into the next

round... they'll... they've got out all your files, gone through them all again, your aptitude tests, they thought you might have cheated, you had very consistent results, absolutely top results and now, if it carries on like this, they'll

MAN I do my best

WOMAN That's not you any more, I don't know you any more, that's not my husband, that's some other man, you're not the man I... maybe it would be better if you

MAN No

WOMAN Or I, if we, if we're not going to, but

MAN No

WOMAN What's the point of all this?

MAN No

WOMAN Go to sleep

MAN I'm trying to

WOMAN Get some sleep, rest, find whatever it is that you... find it, that I don't know, that strength, find it, go on... Don't lie awake, sleep

MAN That's what I'm trying to do, I'm...

WOMAN What are you talking about in your sleep?

MAN Me, nothing

WOMAN I listen to you
Short pause
I write it down

MAN You do what?

WOMAN I write it down, I... I... make notes, I... asked Stefan whether

MAN *like a word in a foreign language* "Stefan"?

WOMAN Your friend, you go back a long way, I
 thought maybe he could

MAN I've known him six months

WOMAN But you're with him all the time

MAN We sit opposite each other in the office

WOMAN Yes, but you

MAN Occasionally we go and do... sport together,
 but

WOMAN I thought maybe he can help you, but

MAN What are you doing?

WOMAN I'm worried about you, I don't want people
 to think I don't look after you, you know, I
 don't want people to say that I neglected...
 they asked me to

MAN Who are you?

WOMAN They like you, we all like you, we don't
 want to lose you
 Short pause.
 You seem upset

MAN Is there anyone else here in this room?

WOMAN You seem upset?

MAN Is anybody there?

WOMAN You seem upset, right now this minute, now...
 the way you're... yes, now... the way you're
 looking at me

MAN What way?

WOMAN So tired

MAN Me?

WOMAN So exhausted

MAN Uh-huh

WOMAN Is it anything to do with me?
The MAN does not answer.
Is something annoying you?

MAN No

WOMAN About me?

MAN No

WOMAN Do you fancy me?

MAN What? Yeah

WOMAN Say it

MAN I fancy you

WOMAN Doesn't sound very convincing

MAN What?

WOMAN It doesn't sound very convincing the way you
say that, say it again

MAN Now?

WOMAN Yes

MAN Is there someone else in here with us?

WOMAN Say it

MAN What is this about?

WOMAN Say it

MAN Can't

WOMAN What?

MAN Can't just because you tell me to

WOMAN Say it

MAN NO

WOMAN SAY IT DAMN IT SAY IT

MAN I fancy you
Pause, she laughs, the sound of waves.
D'you like the new stove?

WOMAN 'S nice

MAN It is nice, isn't it

WOMAN Yes

MAN It's calming.

WOMAN Adds value

MAN Maybe you should look at it a bit more
often.

WOMAN We'll get a better price later on when we
come to sell

MAN Maybe you should just sit in front of it a
bit more often and take a good, long look at
it, at the fire, at the way the flames
slowly build up and then die away again... a
very long look... a very, very long look...
maybe then everything'll sort itself out.
Pause.
Leave me alone all of you

WOMAN Right now I wouldn't if I were you...

MAN Shut your stupid, just shut your idiotic

WOMAN Not now I wouldn't, no, that

MAN I'm doing what I can

WOMAN If that's all you can do then I'm very

MAN I'm doing everything I can.
Short pause.

WOMAN He was screaming again

MAN I know, I'm not deaf.

WOMAN Is it actually him or?

MAN Did the police come again?

WOMAN No, it was his coach.

MAN Which one?

WOMAN The co-ordination coach

MAN Is he sleeping?

WOMAN He'll have an hour, then he wakes up again, last night there was some kind of noise, footsteps, then he spent two hours in the shower with all that horrible loud shouting and crying the whole time and then they played that violin concerto through the streetlamps again and it was so loud that... waves, the sound of waves all the time... the next morning there's the charred remains of a dog lying in our drive and the boy's wearing his jacket and trainers in bed, he's all out of breath... and when I open the door he shouts at me LEAVE ME ALONE JUST LEAVE ME ALONE
Short pause.
Two hours later I go in anyway, he's lying awake, breathing heavily, I go in there, he doesn't even know I'm there, I sit down on the edge of the bed, he's rocking and rocking, cradling his laptop in his arms like it's a teddy bear, very carefully I try to touch him, to calm him down, suddenly he tenses up and twitches... twitches and twitches... and then his eyes open wide and he shouts GET OUT OF HERE THE LOT OF YOU RIGHT NOW
The MAN has fallen asleep.
Hello.

The MAN does not react.
Darling.
*As if she's talking to some undefined person
in the room* You can take him away now

MAN *opens his eyes immediately* What?

WOMAN *laughs* See, I still know how to get your
attention
Laughs.
If we don't do something, we're going to
lose him.

MAN He's sixteen, boys at that age..

WOMAN He's thirteen. He's got a plan, he's got
some kind of plan, but I can't work out what
it is, I can't work it out.

MAN Maybe you've

WOMAN I hid yesterday. Under his bed and he

MAN You did what?

WOMAN I was hiding under his bed last night and he
short pause
he's odd, our boy, I don't know, somehow... he
touched my hand and then he said, don't
worry Mum, I'll get rid of him.

MAN You were lying under his bed while he
touched your hand?

WOMAN He meant you.

MAN How can you

WOMAN I can feel it, he's up to something. With
YOU. There was a photo of you under his
bed. But it wasn't you in the photo, it was
just something that looked like you,
something that reminded me of you but... he
was shaking when he
She breaks off.
Short pause.

MAN Maybe you just dreamt it all.

WOMAN What do you mean, "it all"?

MAN It all.

WOMAN "It all"?

MAN I mean, maybe...

WOMAN In my dream there was water running the whole time, it went on for hours, it was boiling hot and our son was standing in the shower screaming and screaming and screaming while our dog was out in the garden bleeding to death in the snow

MAN We haven't got a dog

WOMAN And then this morning the charred remains of a dog were lying in our drive and its guts and its severed head were outside our bedroom window and our bathroom was flooded.

MAN I didn't see anything.

WOMAN The day before he stared at me for a whole hour and then he said "Know who you are."

MAN He's going through a difficult

WOMAN He doesn't speak in sentences, he

MAN Of course

WOMAN No he doesn't, he doesn't

MAN Of course, he goes to school doesn't he

WOMAN *laughs* Yeah, right, they're starting to bring in teachers from the other side now because they're running out of money because OUR HUSBANDS aren't bringing enough money home because their returns are down because they'd rather look out of the window or fall asleep than... that's why my son can't talk

properly, all he can speak is... gibberish that... I can't understand a word of it, I

MAN You've just got to listen properly

WOMAN There's nothing to listen to. Most of the time he doesn't say anything at all.

MAN What does the co-ordination coach say?

WOMAN Wait and see

MAN Uh-huh

WOMAN The man comes here five times a week, walks off with a ton of money every month and says "Wait and see", that's all he says, BUT I DON'T WANT TO WAIT AND SEE I'VE DONE ENOUGH WAITING, what's wrong with our boy? What's wrong with him? I can't get to the bottom of it, he doesn't write anything, nothing, no diaries, nothing, not even notes in the margins of his schoolbooks, his emails are all completely average, his internet use, the sites he visits, who he chats to, who he orders things from or what films he rents, the coach says it's all perfectly normal, that can't be true, it can't, that boy is not normal, I can tell, he keeps such irregular hours, there's something there, something's not right, something's not right about

The MAN has fallen asleep again.

The WOMAN watches her husband sleeping, she looks around her, rushes round the room then she goes right up close to her husband and looks at him sleeping.

They feel you might be "ill", you've got to get well again, take yourself out of circulation for a while, to think about yourself, life, everything... how you want to spend the time, that's what they said, "the time you've got left", because it seems you can't go on like this.

Pause.

What are you DOING? What? Do you know how long it's taken us to get this far? To get

this house, your job, this property here in the complex, where everyone wants to be and there are hardly any places left, to get a school for the boy at last, to sleep through the night at last, where it's quiet, there are trees, avenues, short distances, not travelling through the city for hours every morning, missing the train, assuming it's actually working, stuck in the car somewhere for hours on end, never getting where you want to go, always in a rush, always frustrated, it's so quiet here, we've got our own airport here, we're picked up in the morning, taken to where we need to go, there are people here who have the same interests as us, people who look out for us, people who are glad to be living here with us, who organize garden parties for us, play badminton with us. If it's our wedding anniversary, the whole community has a party, the children go off to school in the morning and get there, they walk home in the evening and get here too, where else does that happen? And if we've got to work late or go away for the weekend, there are places where we can leave them and where they'll stay until we collect them. There are no muggings, no crazy old people who can't stop asking you the way because they've lost all sense of direction, they've escaped from their homes or they've not got a home to go to anymore, throwing themselves in front of moving cars, here nobody throws themselves out of a window out of desperation, here nobody shouts at their wives or beats their children, ties their children to a radiator at Christmas and abandons them till they've starved to death, the lake, the sunset here, the silence

MAN

What silence? You said yourself that you..

WOMAN

There are piles of applications and loads of competent people, there have never been as many competent people in the world as there are now and they all want to come here.

MAN

We hardly know anyone here. We get up while it's still dark and go to work. We don't get back until long after the sun's gone down. We have a garden, a park, a little lake next door, yes, it is nice here, nice and quiet, EXCEPT FOR THE SHOOTING AT NIGHT... We've got no friends here. Sure, we go to all these get-togethers and barbecues and garage sales and polo nights and garden parties and weddings and I don't know what other events and training seminars and theatre productions and beauty contests and wellness conferences and what do I know parenting counselling and coaching seminars and then for a change we do yoga or pilates, we've even got a creative writing group, where we all get together and write short stories

Laughs.

but... we don't know any of them, we hardly talk to them, not properly, we all exchange the same sort of pleasantries and no-one gets any closer, nobody's remotely interested, nobody's interested in anything, even when they're all singing and laughing together and telling jokes and WHAT DO I KNOW acting out funny scenes from the shows, nobody's seriously interested in these painting lessons or creative writing or church services... or we get a surfing weekend as a bonus but we can't go because we've got to work or we've got community service, we've got to attend all these meetings here, or meetings at the town hall where no-one ever says anything of any consequence or because we're just too stressed to get through all the security checks or because we don't know how to surf in the first place, because we don't enjoy it, the whole ocean's already full of surfers, all members of some bloody team who are surfing away all their bonus points, so as not to stick out or to go windsurfing from some hot air boat

WOMAN

You're mad
She drinks.

MAN

And every Saturday we go to the shows and watch some load of people they've brought in from the sticks in buses beating the crap out of each other, we watch them at the weekend and laugh ourselves sick but we're afraid of them, we're afraid, we hope they're not going to stay here, that one of them isn't going to hide under a bus and find a way in here before they leave and attack us all, none of our old friends has managed to get into the community here, they're all still outside the gates and can't get in or don't want to get in, do you never think about them? Not ever? Or we spend hours in the market square standing waving after parades of soft toys or whatever, what are our neighbours called? What are their names? Tell me, tell me, WHAT ARE THEIR NAMES? Here in our CELEBRATION COMMUNITY, what is it we're actually celebrating? 'Cause I don't know any more.

WOMAN

They all queue up by four thirty in the morning and rattle the gates, they want to get in, they all want to get in and they're no better and no worse than you, but they've got the right ATTITUDE, d'you understand, they have a laugh. And they sing. They enjoy themselves, their lives and the world around them, they LOVE their families AND their jobs, they leave the house in the morning in a good mood and come back in the evening in a good mood, then they go and do some sport with their friends and at night they sleep in a good mood with their wives. Men who enjoy a good fuck, you understand, they're waiting out there and they want your job and to be honest I've got nothing against it if they

MAN

Be quiet! The boy can hear us.

WOMAN

Let him

MAN

Afterwards he'll tell everyone at school again how coarse and stupid his mother is.

WOMAN Shush
 Short pause.
 perhaps he is listening
 Short pause.

MAN They all gave us such weird looks at the
 last parents' evening, as if they knew
 exactly what we talk about in the evenings.

WOMAN He's so odd, he scares me.

MAN Shh, was that? No I think... is he even at
 home?

WOMAN I don't know.
 Pause.
 Speaks quietly. There's no prison here and
 that's why, they say, it would be better to
 suspend your contract for a while.

MAN They said that?

WOMAN Yes, "suspend your contract for a while"... I
 hope you know what that means... no-one's
 going to sack you
 Short pause.
 You get a lot of time to retrain.
 She laughs.
 A lot of time to prepare for another career,
 as whatever. Maybe you can start guarding
 the gate from next Friday or scraping the
 bodies off the electric fence of all the
 nutters who try to climb over here.
 She fetches herself a drink, opens a bottle
 of wine and drinks.

MAN I

WOMAN What's wrong with you, I'm so frightened, I...
 I don't know you any more, what are you
 doing, do you know what you're doing?

MAN Please, I, it's just that

WOMAN You're gambling with our lives, our futures.
 Pause.

If they suspend the contract for a while, we'll have to move out of the house, we'll have to leave the complex, the lake, the garden, last week someone had to leave and within 72 hours somebody else had taken their place and nobody says anything about it, you understand, they're gone, simply gone, we'll have to leave the community, the company, go to another city, more interviews aptitude tests, for days, questionnaires, do we fit in with the other residents, where have we come from, what's our background, are we team players, how do we handle stress, then they'll question the boy and put him through a load of behavioural tests and apart from all that... DO YOU KNOW HOW OLD WE ARE? Nobody's going to take us in our mid forties, why?

She laughs.

This damned container

She means her body.

nobody wants it any more

She laughs.

You can become a dustman or scrub graffiti off the walls or guard the railway station or I don't know... Lie down in the snow and hope someone dumps you in front of the clinic, we'll lose everything

MAN *Pause, he considers for a moment, then*
What? What are we going to lose? What?

WOMAN EVERYTHING

MAN What?
Short pause.
What "everything"? Just what "everything" are you talking about?
Short pause.

WOMAN His emails are entirely normal and yet he spends all night sitting in front of the computer and the next morning none of the security cameras work, they transmit images of people who are meant to be, but no, they show some kind of weird stuff going on on

the other side... how does he get those pictures?

Short pause.

That dead dog's still there in the snow.

MAN What?

WOMAN They promised it wasn't going to snow here any more

MAN Did you tell them?

WOMAN The dead cat's still hanging in the tree. He just lies there in his room with headphones on, perfectly quiet, with his eyes closed and tonight, when we're trying to sleep, then he'll be ghosting through the house

MAN Did you tell them to take the dog away.

WOMAN And the way he... the stuff he wears... and always alone, he's always alone, but the coach says that's perfectly alright. Can't we send him on some kind of course?

MAN What kind of course?

WOMAN I don't know but there must be something, some kind of course that can raise his self-awareness, relieve him of stress or... you know, sometimes I dream about white surfaces. White people moving very slowly across these white surfaces and talking to each other in very simple sentences, saying things like:

- I love you
- I know
- I like everything about you
- I like everything about you too
- The most beautiful moment for me is to wake up next to you and know you're there and you always will be
- That's just what I feel
- I love you
- I love you too

And these white people slowly wander round this white surface and there's snow falling and their hearts get warmer and warmer the colder it gets outside and they hold hands really tight

MAN And suddenly the ice breaks and they all plunge down three thousand metres and drown... you can hear their screams for years while the sun slowly eats away their brains.

WOMAN Just like you.

MAN Yes, just like you.
Short pause.
How did your amateur dramatics at the Community Centre go?

WOMAN The director cut one of my lines

MAN Uh-huh

WOMAN You're not doing us any favours there

MAN Is that what you said to him

WOMAN No, my husband, that's what I said to my husband

MAN Uh-huh

WOMAN Now I don't any more

MAN What?

WOMAN Everyone else got to keep their lines

MAN Maybe there were artistic reasons

WOMAN No, it was pure spite, he hates me, just like everyone else in the group

MAN I don't believe that

WOMAN Everyone else got to keep their lines, just not me

MAN Maybe he was trying...

WOMAN You're not doing us any favours there

MAN Just to

WOMAN I've spent weeks practicing that line

MAN The rhythm

WOMAN Then suddenly without any warning

MAN Maybe the rhythm

WOMAN The line's gone

MAN One line here or there

WOMAN That line was essential to my character

MAN So there were characters?

WOMAN I needed that line

MAN Were they historical?

WOMAN That line meant everything to me, without
that one line I was... I was invisible, I
wasn't there any more YOU'RE NOT DOING US
ANY FAVOURS THERE I wanted that line,
without that line I

MAN So what did you say?

WOMAN You're not doing us any favours there

MAN No, I mean

WOMAN Yes, what do you mean? You're not even
listening. You're not doing us any favours
there.

MAN To him, the director?

WOMAN Oh I don't bother talking to him, he just
laughs when you say something to him, he
wants everything to be jolly, that's all.

MAN Yes, but

WOMAN Nothing, I didn't say anything else, I said: if I'm not allowed to say this line then I'm not going to say any of the others either, I WON'T SAY ANYTHING ANY MORE, that's what I told him, he can ring me if he changes his mind, my character needs that line, it doesn't need any of the others but it needs that one, that one, you understand, otherwise it can't breathe, it's going to suffocate, its throat is going to freeze shut and it's going to throw up everything it's eaten in the last few years in one hard, slimy icy lump and stir it around in its own disfigured mask of a face burnt out by the emptiness of its own utter talentless uselessness like a bucket of paint you pour onto a blank canvas and stir around for so long that eventually it turns into a WORK OF ART, I NEED THAT LINE and if I don't get that line then nobody should say anything, we don't need words any more because humanity will be finished ONCE AND FOR ALL, there'll be no more people any more, at least not any who can put one foot in front of the other without the benefit of artificial limbs or very strong painkillers, THEN THEY'LL ALL COLLAPSE, if there's anything left that's worth leaving the house for, then it'll all be gone, EVERYTHING, if I lose that line the world will lose its light and GOD WILL RECLAIM THE GIFTS HE HAS WASTED ON THE UNWORTHY

MAN What's the play about?

WOMAN The truth

MAN And what else?

WOMAN It's about the truth - for my character it's only ever been about the truth although all the others claim the opposite, but they're wrong, the others are wrong, I'm right, they're wrong, it's a play about a woman who

is right and about other people who are wrong, RIGHT YOU UNDERSTAND I AM RIGHT RIGHT, that's what the play's about
Short pause.

and it's really up to me to decide what lines I need and what I don't need.

MAN

Are you still going to do it?

WOMAN

Everyone else got to keep their lines, some of them even got new ones, just me, I was the only one who's got a line less, the only one who had their tongue cut out in front of all the others and was turned into a figure of ridicule, I was the only one who got chained naked to the gates of the prison and paraded on a long leash and everyone killed themselves laughing KILLED THEMSELVES YOU HEAR ME KILLED THEMSELVES and my line was the only line that really needs to be heard, you can get rid of any other line in the play just NOT THAT ONE

Suddenly dangerous and aggressive on a level never suspected before NOT THAT ONE YOU UNDERSTAND NOT THAT ONE IT'S MINE just like my child he's mine too and I'm not going to let anyone or anything take him away from me! D'YOU UNDERSTAND ME YOU... VICTIM

MAN

What?

WOMAN

I'm not going to let my son be taken away, I'm not going to move from here either, I'm not giving him up, he's mine, he's going to protect me when they all come over here, when they break through the walls, when they swim over here and set fire to everything, line us all up and stare at us... for hours... staring and staring... their knackered, awkward, filthy eyes staring at us for days, for hours on end, and we'll just stand there in a line naked and they'll be staring at us for days on end till we collapse devoid of strength or will and they'll just leave us lying there, step over us while they settle down in our homes and watch the fire in the grate and listen to the gentle roll of the

sea on a balmy summer evening, because there will only be balmy summer evenings, of absolute calm and purity, like a song from long-forgotten days, bright and tender and somewhere in the rising flames a child is playing... I don't care about the theatre group from the community centre. I don't care whether I say that line or not... but they will come and their stares will overwhelm us and we will drown in a pool of blood created by all the questions they have for us when they line us all up and we're called to account for everything we've done... they're going to really fuck us ragged with their big dirty bodies till we've nothing more to say, NOTHING, it's going to be so quiet here, so quiet, and all that, all that pent up testosterone over there's going to flush us away, we'll be out of here, gone.

MAN You're sick.

WOMAN I can see the truth

MAN Your mind is completely sick

WOMAN I went there

MAN When?

WOMAN Last night. I had a look round

MAN Uh-huh

WOMAN I was there, first time in years, walked down our old street, where we both went to school, when there still were schools and streets, I had a walk around, at night, took a good look at everything, MAKE AN EFFORT WORK, I don't want to lose all this

MAN We were happy there

WOMAN That was twenty years ago, WORK MAKE AN EFFORT, if they suspend your contract then... this house belongs to the company... they'll just book a lorry, it'll take fifteen

minutes, no more, they've got special units, twenty minutes at the most, and every trace will be wiped out, we won't exist here any more and we'll never see the boy again

MAN How did you get through the gate at night?

WOMAN I don't want to go back there again, I want to stay here, in this area if the police come they DON'T shoot you... where else does that happen? Where else have you got the feeling that the police are genuinely there for your safety, they won't rape you while you're out shopping, where else does that happen? Not even the camera crews go there any more, all images are embargoed, no photos, nothing's permitted, and you've got no chance of ever getting out of there again, no matter how many forms you fill in, even if you fill the forms in correctly you're not going to get out because there aren't any places left in the centre, if we have to leave now, if we have to leave now then... then we'll never be coming back, I'm telling you, never ever, we will be out for ever and stay there... with all the confused, deranged filth the rejects

Short pause.

Sometimes you can hear screams at night, sirens, you can see fires on the other side, in the Autumn, when the leaves have fallen, in November: then through the bare branches you can see the city behind the electric fence slowly falling apart. The people there, demented, ugly, full of anger and incomprehension, muddling their way around between all the billboards, all the hospitals closed, the schools

MAN I love you

WOMAN That's not the point.

MAN I can't do this any more

WOMAN That doesn't matter. Nobody can. Pull yourself together, everyone else is.

MAN I've got the feeling...

WOMAN "Feeling", "feeling", that's not the point. People like us ought to be glad that we've made it this far, we shouldn't really be here, we don't belong and they notice, they notice that... they notice that you don't enjoy anything any more and they see it as ingratitude, they've given you so much, given you a job, gradually built you up and you thank them with this indifference, this inertia, nothing matters to you.

MAN Come here

WOMAN No

MAN Come to me

WOMAN No
Sound of waves.
We're going to see this through to the end, together, you and me.

MAN And where exactly is that going to take us?

WOMAN To the end, till we can't go any further, till we've no strength left.
Pause.
D'you understand.

MAN But I don't

WOMAN Do you understand!

MAN Yes.
The BOY enters.

WOMAN Hello
The BOY says nothing, looks at his parents contemptuously and crosses the space in the direction of his room. The MAN and WOMAN say nothing, they sit there waiting, motionless.

BOY *comes back* You shouldn't

WOMAN Hello, how are you?

BOY Thousand times. A THOUSAND TIMES MAN

WOMAN Would you like something to eat?

BOY How many more? I MEAN HOW MANY MORE?
He exits again.
Pause.
The BOY enters once more.
NO FUCK NOT NO I YOU OH MAN
He exits, re-enters, intending to leave the house, looks at his mother.
I'm warning you
He exits again.

WOMAN Stop.

BOY What do you want?

WOMAN I wanted

BOY What? What is it you want?

WOMAN Sit down

BOY No

WOMAN *very softly* Just sit down

BOY No

WOMAN Please just sit down

BOY No, I

WOMAN Sit down, just for a moment

BOY If you're going to... then

WOMAN Please just sit down a moment, ok

BOY *sits down, stares at the WOMAN and the MAN*
I'm sitting

WOMAN I

BOY Can I go now?

WOMAN In a minute. I wanted to
Breaks off.
*Pause, the BOY stares at her again, looks
deep into her eyes.*

BOY 'S everything ok?

WOMAN What?

BOY With you?

WOMAN I

BOY "Mum"
Pause.

WOMAN I wanted to

BOY Yeah?

WOMAN Listen, I

BOY What?

WOMAN I wanted

BOY Yes?

WOMAN To ask you

BOY What?

WOMAN Something

BOY What is the
Short pause.
matter with you. "Mum"

WOMAN Just a minute.
Pause.
Are you moving the furniture in the night?

BOY What?

WOMAN Are you
 Short pause.
 The furniture. Every morning it's always
 Short pause.
 Somewhere else
 Short pause.
 Here, I mean. In the room. Every morning
 the furniture is somewhere else in the room
 and I can hear scratching, this scratching
 sound, in the night, and you never sleep.

BOY Can I go now?

WOMAN You walk around the house. Slowly. Or you
 crawl. During the night you crawl around
 the house on all floors and rearrange the
 furniture. Some things are missing and the
 paint... the paint's been scratched off the
 walls.

BOY Can I go now?

WOMAN Where are you going?

BOY OUT!!!

MAN *has woken up* How did the training go?

BOY Can I go now, please.

WOMAN No.

MAN Come on. How did the training go?

BOY God's sake, it's training, that's all, we
 chase the ball around and try to score
 goals, what about it, what the hell, can I
 go now?

WOMAN No, first I want. At night... where are you?

BOY I'm tired

MAN He's tired.

WOMAN Of course he's tired, he never sleeps.

BOY Can you lend me some money, I need

MAN How much?

BOY Two thousand

MAN Two thousand?

BOY Yeah, I... please

WOMAN Two THOUSAND?

BOY Yeah, it's only because... just give it to me

WOMAN Where are you?

BOY Here

WOMAN At night, where are you then?

BOY Here. In my bed.

MAN Do you know anything about those boys who
are missing?

BOY Leave me alone.

WOMAN Do you know them?

BOY No-one knows anything about the missing
boys.

WOMAN But you know them?

BOY Can I go now?

WOMAN You meet them occasionally?

BOY What?

MAN Do you

BOY CAN I GO NOW?

WOMAN Where do you want to go?

BOY Out.

WOMAN Yes, but where

BOY OUT I WANT TO GO OUT

WOMAN YES BUT WHERE?

BOY *calm again* You know, out, God's sake, out.
JUST OUT.

WOMAN You sleep less than four hours a day.

BOY I want to get out of here.
He stands up and goes to the door.

MAN Yeah, go on, go, just go, go out

WOMAN No, you're staying here. Sit down there.
Short pause.
Do you know the boys who were found on the
fence? Do you know them?
The BOY looks at the floor, does not answer.
Did you know them?

BOY How am I supposed to know?

MAN Did you know them?

BOY What does he mean?

WOMAN Did you know the boys they found on the
fence?

BOY How am I supposed to know that. They didn't
have faces any more, no idea if I knew them
or not.

MAN But a couple of boys disappeared at the same
time, what about them, did you? I mean do
you know

BOY I don't know anything

WOMAN Why aren't you sleeping? What are you doing
all night?
*He sits down, a DVD can be seen in his
pocket which could not be seen before.*

What's that film you've got there?

BOY Don't know. Some film.

WOMAN Oh right.

MAN What your mother means is what's on there.

BOY Don't know. Don't know it.

WOMAN Where did you get it from?

BOY Don't know, someone gave it to me.

WOMAN Someone gave it to you, fine.
Short pause.
Who?

BOY What?

MAN Who gave you the film?

BOY Kid in my class.

WOMAN What's this kid's name, do we know him?

BOY No.

MAN Name.

BOY Thomas.

WOMAN Aha, Thomas, and what does this Thomas do.

BOY He's in my class.

MAN Yes, and what does he do apart from that, when he's not at school. What does he do then?

BOY Homework or he goes on the computer.
At the word "computer" the MAN and WOMAN exchange alarmed glances.

MAN What's this film about? What's the story?
Has it got a subject?

WOMAN We're only asking.

BOY But I don't know the answer. Can I go now?

WOMAN No, we're talking now, we're having a conversation. For God's sake, what's so difficult about that, we can just talk to each other, can't we, we're a family.

BOY But I don't know this man.

WOMAN Stop being so stupid, that's your father, so

BOY So what, I still don't know him.

MAN Let's just talk for a bit then
Pause, no-one says anything.
How was it at school?

BOY It's Sunday.

MAN Ah right.
Pause.

WOMAN Well... Paul? Do you still see him now and again?
Pause.

BOY D'you mean me?

WOMAN Yes I mean you, who else would I mean?

BOY Your husband.

WOMAN No, I mean you.

BOY Who's Paul?

WOMAN You know, Paul.

BOY Don't know any Paul.

MAN Your friend Paul from the Astronomy Club.

BOY What Astronomy Club?

WOMAN For God's sake, the Astronomy Club. The one you started six months ago.

BOY You sure you've not got me confused with somebody else?

WOMAN No, I mean YOU.

BOY Some other kid who lived here some time

WOMAN No

BOY Or from another marriage with another husband, is that possible?

WOMAN You started an Astronomy Club and there was a boy in it called Paul.
Pause.

BOY Paul?

WOMAN Yes, Paul.

BOY Oh right. You mean Paul.

WOMAN Yes, that's right, Paul.

BOY He disappeared.

WOMAN Disappeared, how?

BOY Gone. Suddenly he just wasn't there.

WOMAN And why is that, because... look, I'm only asking because
The MAN has fallen asleep.

BOY Can he go?

WOMAN What?

BOY Don't want him here.

WOMAN You didn't sleep again last night.

BOY I did

BOY Go away, please, just go.

WOMAN What do you know about it?

BOY *stands up* HE'S GOT TO GO

MAN All sick

WOMAN The cameras don't work any more, someone's hacked into them, the recordings have all vanished, the cctv cameras don't transmit any more, they send nonsense, things that aren't happening.

MAN Your mother's spent all day evaluating the cctv footage and doesn't know any more whether she dreamt it all or whether

WOMAN QUIET! The cameras are showing something that's not happening. And that scares me! They send weird, really, really weird, have you got something to do with this?

BOY Can I go, I've got to

WOMAN NO! Where is this Paul? He was here, he used to keep visiting you, where is he now? HE WAS ON ONE OF THESE FILMS, why are the cameras showing him here at night when he's disappeared? Where is he? What are you doing at night?

BOY You're sick, both of you.

MAN You are

BOY What

MAN You're sick, everyone says so!

BOY Who says that?

MAN Everyone

BOY Who's everyone, who?

MAN Everyone.

BOY Yeah, who, who says that?

MAN EVERYONE

WOMAN What are you doing on your computer at night, what is it?

BOY Everyone talks about you.

WOMAN The cctv pictures show... people who aren't listed anywhere and nobody knows whether these people actually exist or whether

MAN Everyone talks about YOU. My son is... peculiar, inhibited, no-one can get near him. He's up to something.

BOY He should leave me alone. Tell him to go back to sleep AND LEAVE ME ALONE. If you come into my room once more, at night, and search through my things or mess up my data, then YOU ARE OUT OF IT, got that. It happens very fast.
Pause.

WOMAN What is going ON here? MY GOD!
Pause, sound of waves.

BOY Can I go and play now, Mum?

MAN "Go and play", what is it you want to play?

WOMAN They found a child's body near the town hall last night, someone had thrown it over the fence, was that you?

BOY There is no town hall here.

WOMAN BUT THAT'S WHAT THE CAMERAS SHOWED.

BOY Bollocks.

WOMAN All the cars were torched, that's what the cameras showed, but the next morning... they were all there again... all new cars, so we'd have no suspicions, or were they never

torched, because they were just images that YOU during the night while you're not sleeping and you're here next door on your computer

BOY I've got to go

WOMAN Where?

BOY To my friends.

MAN You haven't got any friends, they've all disappeared.

WOMAN *to the BOY* Do you know the code? Did he give you the code? That gate has got to stay shut, even if you don't understand that yet, but that gate has got to stay shut. There are all those youngmen there on the other side and you, you're all alone, one little boy on his own in the whole area and there, there are hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands in every high rise, you haven't got a chance boy, when they come, they're going to trample right over you, they won't even see you and that's why we've got the code, THE FENCE HAS GOT TO STAY SHUT, DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME!
She grabs hold of the BOY.
DO YOU UNDERSTAND?
Short pause.

BOY YES!
She releases him, short pause.
Can we move away from here, Mum?

WOMAN Where do you want to go to?

BOY There's nothing here.

WOMAN There's everything here we need for a wonderful life.

BOY If I see one more happy pensioner painting the sun setting over the sea, I am going to beat them to a pulp.

WOMAN We've got our own airport

BOY But we don't fly anywhere.

WOMAN Why should we when we've got everything here?

BOY We hardly know anyone here.

WOMAN We know everyone here, absolutely everyone.

BOY I don't mean that, I mean

WOMAN And everyone knows us

BOY But still, there's... nothing here, nothing.
He looks at the MAN, lying there with his eyes closed.
And this bloke here, "your husband".

WOMAN Come here

BOY Couldn't you find any other father for me?
Did you have to pick him? Was there nothing better on offer? There are masses of men looking for families, why did it have to be him? He's useless.

WOMAN Come over to me, please

BOY Who is that?

WOMAN Come on!
Takes him in her arms.
You mustn't destroy your own future. One day you'll understand the point of all this.
Short pause.
The gate has got to stay locked, that is the one really important thing I can tell you to take on your way, don't forget that, ever: the gate has got to stay locked!
Short pause.

BOY Can I go out for a bit, just a bit, please.
Can I just go out for a bit, please, can I.
Listen to the waves. Hear them breaking, the sound, the colours of the shadows in the

evening sun. The roar. The light at the other end of the water. The sound when they're just about to break, it's so... beautiful.

Pause, he exits, pause.

MAN *wakes up* Has he gone?

WOMAN He knows something.

MAN He's not coming back.

WOMAN Maybe he is the one who's leaving the gate, but how can he be, he doesn't know the code, the kids don't know the code, do they? Did you tell him the code, did you?

MAN They've all vanished. Unreachable.

WOMAN You don't care at all

MAN Go to sleep
He closes his eyes.

WOMAN Talk to him.

MAN He'll just laugh at me.

WOMAN Try somehow

MAN He despises me

WOMAN Everything's leaving me, everything.

MAN Go to sleep.

WOMAN Everything's swimming away. The tide's coming in and it'll wash them up on the shore and carry everything else away. There'll be nothing else left, nothing.
Pause.
You've got to find it again, inside you, that or else we're or else we'll have to NO you've got to, that strength, you've got to go there and you've got to, you've got to look for it, look inside yourself, keep going, the boy needs you, the boy's

completely confused because you, these children are all leaving us, they've all gone, quite suddenly, they go out and never come... you've got to, can't you see how confused our boy's been since he could feel that we're, we're no longer secure here, that we might have to, because you, they tell the children at school if their parents have problems at work, if their performance dips, can't you see how CONFUSED the boy is, you've got to

MAN *with his eyes closed* Perhaps he knows everything, he knows the code and lets them in, just to, to see what they're going to do, like other boys his age dissect insects and watch them slowly die, twitching and writhing in pain, so he, as soon as he's cracked the code, 'll open the gate and let them all in, to see how we're slowly buried under the tide of them, how they slowly cut off our air supply, how we, you and I, and everyone he knows slowly twitch to our deaths.
Pause.
They shot them.

WOMAN What?

MAN They shot Paul and the other boys, I heard, it's what they're saying, because they wanted to open the gate at night, just to see what would happen and it'll be exactly the same with him... he won't be able to stand it here much longer and then he'll try to break through the fence and open the gate

WOMAN That's your fault, he can tell that there's something not right with YOU and he's reacting to it, he's very... vulnerable

MAN *still with his eyes closed* What do you think about us?

WOMAN About us?

MAN Yes. About you and me, our life? Do you like it?

WOMAN Yes.

MAN Are you sure?

WOMAN We've got everything here we

MAN No, I mean you don't miss anything?

WOMAN No

MAN You've got no

WOMAN Needs, no

MAN You want everything to

WOMAN Where we are in life... for people like us... remember where we've come from, it can't get any better for us, it can't, it can only get worse, it's all in your hands

MAN I work

WOMAN You don't enjoy it

MAN I

WOMAN You don't love your work, you go in but you're not looking forward to it, to the people there, your desk, your computer, you're not looking forward to that, you don't love them, the people you see there

MAN They're different every day

WOMAN That doesn't matter, you've got to love them

MAN The others just disappear

WOMAN And you don't love them and that's something... they notice... like him... they notice that something's different, it doesn't matter that you're still good you're committed, they notice that something about

you... IN you... has changed and that's... not
what they want... please

MAN What?

WOMAN Please

MAN What is it?

WOMAN Please please please

MAN What is it?
A wave is heard.

WOMAN Now

MAN No

WOMAN Yes

MAN No

WOMAN *Gunfire, can you hear it? Now he's gone.*

MAN I can't hear anything

WOMAN Now, this second, and... now they're playing
those waves again, I...

MAN People just say that... they really are waves...
believe me

WOMAN *Pause, wave gets louder* You've got to get
it back

MAN What?

WOMAN Inside you, you've got to

MAN He's not coming back.

WOMAN You've got to, got to find it again

MAN That's how they all disappeared.

WOMAN Or else we'll be lost, no matter how hard you work, they can tell, they can feel it and I can't go on lying for you any more

MAN Or he'll make it, he'll meet the boys who've disappeared and they'll open the gates together and watch us slowly plunge to our deaths, thousands of metres, our legs twitching in mid-air as if they're trying to touch the ground and we're screaming, screaming as the sun slowly eats away our brains. You can't do WHAT?

WOMAN I've got to tell them tomorrow whether you want to stay here or not, whether you want to try again or whether they should give the place to someone else, another man who wants to make more of his life than you, I'm supposed to tell them that tomorrow.

MAN When?

WOMAN *looks at her watch* In eighteen hours
Short pause.
Look for it, look for it inside yourself, for that, that, look, you're so inert, you're going to kill us, you've got to find it again and... find it and keep it, hold it tight and... if they give someone else your contract, we're both dead, then we'll be living a life that's not a life any more.

MAN And this one here, is this one?

WOMAN I don't know, yes, it is, yes, this here, this here is the best thing that people like us can get, people with our background, we can't expect any more, we've made it, we can't get any higher, don't gamble with this, please, don't throw this away, go to sleep, doesn't matter how, go to sleep, have a really good sleep tonight and go in there in the morning with new strength, go to sleep and find that... that joy, find it again at last, or else we're finished.

Fade out, the end.