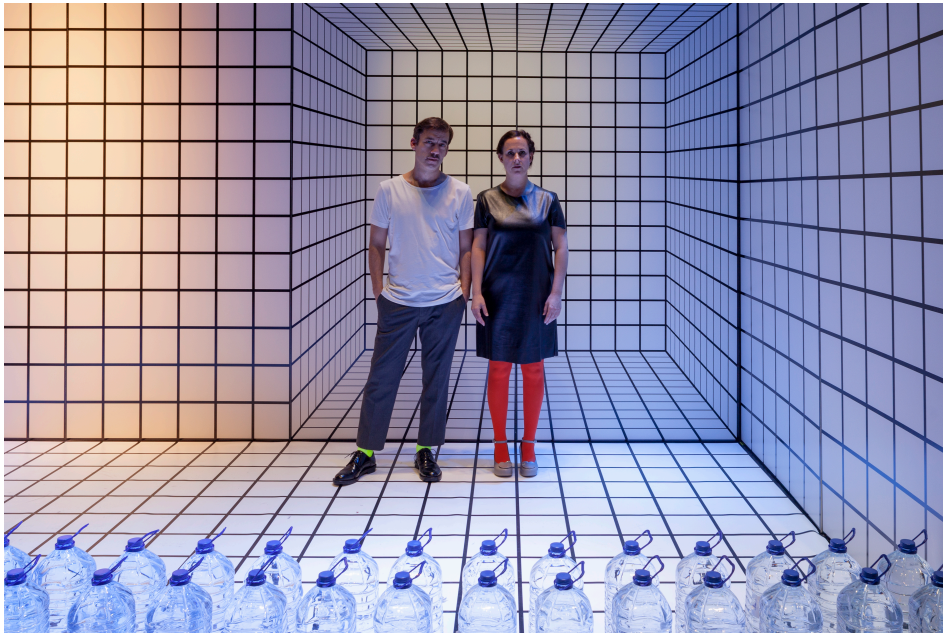


mala voadora & Third Angel present  
**THE PARADISE PROJECT /**  
**PROJETO PARAÍSO**  
(2015)



**PERFORMANCE TEXT**  
(Edinburgh Fringe version, August 2015)

thirdangel.co.uk  
malavoadora.pt

**Third Angel** was an innovative and prolific performance and participation company based in Sheffield from 1995-2023. Led by Co-Artistic Directors Rachael Walton and Alexander Kelly, the company's work was created through an evolving devising process, and encompassed theatre, live art, installation, games, film, video art, documentary, photography, and digital media.

Third Angel reached audiences across the UK, mainland Europe, the Middle East, and North and South America. Their collaborations with artists and specialists from various fields, such as psychology, geography and astrophysics, led to interdisciplinary and boundary-pushing productions.

In addition to their shows, the company was committed to community engagement and education. Third Angel ran an acclaimed participation programme, mentoring emerging and mid-career artists and companies, delivering Arts Award to young people and running education residencies at all levels, as well as the weekly theatre making group for teenagers, *Future Makers*.

The company's archive is held at the Theatre Collection at the University of Bristol ([www.bristol.ac.uk/theatre-collection/](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/theatre-collection/)) and at [thirdangel.co.uk](http://thirdangel.co.uk).

“Consistently innovative and challenging... extraordinary performances.” *The Times*

“...engaging with the big issues about how we live with a fierce intelligence.” *The Guardian*

“A genuinely brilliant theatre company.” *Yorkshire Post*

Third Angel was an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation, 2014-2022, and an Associate Company at Sheffield Theatres.

mala voadora & Third Angel present  
**THE PARADISE PROJECT / PROJETO PARAÍSO**

**Performed by:**

**PERSON A**

**Jerry Killick, Chris Thorpe or Rachael Walton**

**PERSON B**

**Tânia Alves, Jorge Andrade, Alexander Kelly or Stacey Sampson**

Conceived and devised by

**Jorge Andrade**

**José Capela**

**Alexander Kelly**

**Chris Thorpe**

**Rachael Walton**

In collaboration with

**Tânia Alves**

**David Cabecinha**

**Lucy Ellinson**

**Jerry Killick**

**Stacey Sampson**

**Fernando Villas-Boas**

Technical Manager

**Craig Davidson**

Technical Intern

**Michael Gooch**

Video Documentation

**Jorge Jácome**

With creative input from

**Hannah Butterfield**

**Mark Maughan**

Photography

**José Carlos Duarte**

Translation

**Fernando Villas-Boas**

Production & Management

**Hilary Foster & Liz**

**Johnson (Third Angel)**

**Manuel Poças, Joana**

**Santos & Vânia**

**Rodrigues (mala voadora)**

Scenography

**José Capela**

with image editing by

**António MV &**

**Tiago Pinhal Costa**

With special thanks to:

**Renske Doorenspleet**

**Steve Fuller**

**Peter Marshall**

**Maria Do Mar Pereira**

**Ian Stewart**

**Nathaniel Tkacz**

**Emilie Whitaker.**

Lighting Design

**Jim Harrison**

**Eduardo Abdála**

Sound Design

**Rui Lima**

**Sérgio Martins**

**Ivan Mack**

With thanks to:  
**Daniel Pinheiro**  
**Daniel Worm d'Assumpção**  
**Prado**  
**Matt Burman, Paul Warwick, Ed Collier**  
**Zoukak Theatre**  
**Sheffield Theatres**  
all of the staff at **Teatro Maria Matos**  
and **Warwick Arts Centre**.

A co-production with  
**Warwick Arts Centre**  
**Maria Matos Teatro Municipal**  
and **House on Fire**,  
with the support of the  
**Culture Programme of the European Union**.

Supported by  
**Companhia Nacional de Bailado**  
**Largo Residências**  
and **Caixas Baratas**.

Supported using public funding by the  
**National Lottery through Arts Council England**  
**Secretario de Estado da Cultura**  
and **DG Artes**.

\*\*

You are welcome to perform *The Paradise Project* in an educational or amateur setting – we'd love to hear about it.

If you are interested in performing *The Paradise Project* professionally please contact us on:  
[testcard-distraction@tutanota.com](mailto:testcard-distraction@tutanota.com)

*The Paradise Project* was the second collaboration between Third Angel and mala voadora following the project that produced both *What I Heard About the World* and *Story Map*.

In much of Third Angel's work over the years there was a yearning for something better. Sometimes that was an escapism, sometimes a dream of how things might have turned out differently. Working with mala voadora on *What I Heard About the World*, we gathered stories from all across the globe. We spent a lot of time thinking about individuals in their own stories.

So when mala voadora proposed a suite of shows exploring the idea of Paradise – each one a collaboration with a different company – we knew it made sense as the next step in our collaboration. We spent a lot of time thinking about the differences between utopia and paradise, and exploring how these things might be presented on stage.

Early on we were lucky enough to be supported by Warwick Arts Centre, which meant we were able to meet a number of academics and researchers from the fields of sociology, mathematics, art history, technology, politics and theology who visited us in the devising room and shared their thinking with us. They really helped our understanding of the territory we were exploring, particularly that utopia is a journey, whilst paradise is a destination.

Within all this we found a human story – two individuals trying to build something better. We liked the contrast in scale. Two people with a job to do every day. It's just that their job is to try to build a better world. They examine society as a whole from voting systems and human rights to basic needs for survival.

The show was designed so that it could be presented by different combinations of performers from the two companies, Person A and Person B, and five different combinations of casts appeared in Lisbon, Warwick, Edinburgh and Sheffield (where it was performed to graphics and illustration students and staff at Sheffield Hallam University as part of an on-going collaboration there).

Overall *The Paradise Project* takes an optimistic view of the human race's ability to build and strive for better through two characters as they take on the task of building a new utopia. The show continued to evolve as it toured, with the characters' awareness of what they were doing, and their mechanism of recording the stories they tell of imperfect utopias changing from one iteration to the next.

This version was presented at the Edinburgh Fringe in the summer of 2015.

Throughout the performance the PERSON A and PERSON B build an environment: constructing the walls and furniture, gathering and placing props as suggested by the text.

As the audience enter, all of the materials, tools and resources that will be require are laid out neatly around the stage.

In between conversations and building, they record stories: reading them from files, talking to the audience, or into a mic, or to pets, or to an unseen listener, or to CB radio.

\*\*

The text is divided up into sections with **TITLES**, but those titles do not need to be made apparent to the audience.

*PERSON A and PERSON B enter.*

*They both retrieve a Case File to read.*

## **TREE**

PERSON B Activate Processing.

Attempt number 347.

She is sitting in a park, in the centre of a city she didn't grow up in.

In the park there is a tree that, or at least this is what the sign below it says, was transplanted here four hundred years ago at a time of conquest. When the nation the city was in, and still is in, was rich and powerful. And then there were cars, and trams, and still the tree, and a great fire, that the tree survived, and several wars that the tree barely noticed, and there were times when the nation was rich, and rich people's dogs pissed on the tree, and it was poor, and stray dogs pissed on the tree, and when it was ruled by a man for a long time who built a fence round the tree and nothing pissed on it at all.

But now she sits in her lunch break and she unwraps a sandwich and she looks at the tree. And thinks how the tree is still just a tree after all that. After all the problems it has seen come and go.

And the woman eats her sandwich and drinks a coffee, and looks at the tree. And wonders exactly how many attempts to create stability and how many failures it has seen. How many ideas have lived and died in people on the Earth while the tree has been alive.

The tree is an idea that never had to be proved. It wasn't looking for anything. It was somewhere else and it was here and it is still here.

She sits and eats her sandwich and drinks her coffee, and disposes carefully of the wrapper and the cup, and walks away from the park back to the office where she works.

And now the tree itself is dying. It was brought here from where it should have been, to commemorate a dream that couldn't last of an Empire that would last forever, and now, finally, the tree is dying, a long way from home. It has outlasted the idea that brought it here, and the people that brought it here. But eventually it can only stand to

see so much failure. Eventually it must make way for another idea.

## TRUCKS

PERSON A Attempt number 348.

When they come out of the trucks, many of them are frightened. They've never seen the countryside before. The trucks rattle across the bridge and pull up into the yard. Three or four trucks usually, that have limped for half a day up the road from the city.

The trucks pull up in the yard in a cloud of dust and the engines stop and for a moment there is silence.

Sometimes he wonders which will run out first. The people, or the road. But the road won't be fixed, and the trucks won't be fixed. These things will break down and all will be in the perfect state. Equilibrium of land and people.

The trucks' engines cough and stop in the yard and the dust settles. The driver and guard of each truck come to the rear and let the metal tail-gates down.

There is quiet, no voices, and maybe the sound of work from the fields behind the line of trees and he shouts – come out – and there is a pause, and then they come.

People in the rags of city clothes come stumbling down the ramps and stand in the dust, or in the mud, and look around them, and do not know what to do. Look around them at countryside they have never seen before. And he says – welcome.

And behind them the drivers and the guards drag out the ones who failed to complete the journey and take them away.

And he walks towards them, keeping the gun in his pocket. And the first one. It is usually someone older, and often they are still wearing the lenseless frames of their glasses. The first one to show outrage, or ask a question, or raise their voice to him, he raises the gun quickly and he puts it to their temple, and he fires it. All in one movement.



If anyone screams, he waits patiently until they stop. And he says again – welcome.

Life here is very simple. First, forget everything you ever knew. About electricity, or books, or family. All those things, and the life connected to them, are irrelevant here. Forget your names. Forget all the unnecessary words you were taught at school. Look around you. Appreciate how lucky you are to be here. In a moment you will be shown how to work, where to eat, and where to sleep. This is life. It is simple.

Do you have any questions. There are never any questions. And then more people come out of the trees behind him, and take them away. And the cities will eventually be empty.

And this happens twice every day. They will grow food together, and eat together, and that will be the natural state of things, and everyone will finally be happy.

End Recording.

*A and B put the STAIRS in place.*

*They go and get the materials they need for building the TABLE.*

*They start to build the TABLE.*

## LYING

A Is killing wrong in here?

B Why would you be killing?

A But in general.

B There's no such thing as general. Who am I killing? Have they dismembered my family? Are they pointing a gun at you? Do I just want to? For fun?

A Is stealing wrong?

B Look, let's just accept that whatever kind of antisocial act you could come up with, I'm going to find some exceptional circumstances in which it's justified.

A But we need-

B Do we? Do we really though. Let's just say that you and me, as far as we know, aren't going to steal from, kill, intimidate, hurt, or non-consensually fuck each other in any circumstances we currently know of.

A What if something changes?

B We'll deal with it.

A Purely on trust?

B I guess so.

A Okay. There's just you and me here. Can't we at least say that lying's wrong.

B It depends.

A It depends? On what?

B The circumstances. If I'm lying to save your feelings, then maybe that's okay.

A To save my feelings?

B Yeah. Not just for you, but to keep the peace. Your feelings are precious, of course.

A But in the long run, I really think that telling the truth -

B Let's do a quick experiment. Let's tell the truth. Just for a minute.

A OK.

B You go first.

A You're great company.

B Thanks

A You've got nice hair. And it's clean, too.

B Thanks.

A Now you tell me.

B Tell you what?

A Tell me I'm great company and I've got nice hair.

B But you're not. I don't like your hair and sometimes you're incredibly annoying. You're incapable of ever fully appreciating my point of view and you have an absolutist worldview that occasionally makes me want to rip my own fucking arms off.

A That's not fair.

B It might not be fair but it's true.

A Not all the time.

B No, not all the time. But it was true when I said it.

A Is it true now?

B Probably only seventy percent as true as it was.

Do you still think I'm good company?

A Not as much, no.

B Well there you go then. We wouldn't be in this awkward position if we'd both lied.

## PODIUM

A Activate Processing.

Account number 349.

The speech is relayed, further and further back, through loudspeakers. Ranks and ranks of loudspeakers.

The crowd is so huge, and so dense that she can barely see the edge of it.. As she walks from the temporary wings to the podium there is a roar so loud it is not even noise. A desperate need for someone to articulate all their dissatisfactions into something that might hold.

The crowd is so huge that she worries, if they all breathe in at the same time, there will be a dangerous drop in atmospheric pressure.

Her fingers tense around the edges of the podium.

She closes her eyes, and somehow doing that makes the crowd bigger. She swallows. She inhales. Exhales.

Suddenly the noise drops away.

And she picks up the notes. She picks the papers up in her right hand, and extends her right arm so that it is at right-angles to her body, and drops them to the floor.

And she speaks. From the heart. She tells them about her childhood. About watching stars explode above the city she grew up in. Of a long journey to be here. Of the years, quietly feeling this moment grow inside her.

She traces imaginary lines in the air, knowing that most of the people in front of her are too far away to see her outstretched fingers. Possibly hidden by the curve of the Earth.

Her hands describe shapes that are geometrically impossible. Connected points in four dimensions, each point of the impossible shape a stage in a journey.

She says. And that is the triumph and the tragedy. Not one of us will get all that we want, and everyone will die trying.

So, cheer all you want. If you want to, set the buildings on fire. Smash the banks to dust. Buy groceries for your neighbours. Improve the lives of people you never knew or met and will never know or meet. Sabotage the aeroplanes they use for deportations. Prevent the forced movement of people. Dig up the golf courses and plant food. Piss in the fountains. Make the faithful live by the principles they judge by. And all you can hope is to live through part of a time where goodness has the upper hand. To play a small part in that.

For a while, soon, goodness might have the upper hand. If you want it. And that is all we can hope for. But only ever for a while. That is all. That is the least and most that we can fail to do.

End Recording.

## **BUTTERFLIES**

*They are attaching the top of the table.*

A           What's your favourite living creature?

B Butterflies.

A Butterflies?

B Yeah.

A They're pretty I suppose.

B They're more than pretty. They're amazing. They can fly, but that's not the amazing thing. You probably think that a caterpillar gets into a chrysalis, then it grows wings out of its body, inside its little case. But that's not what happens. The wings are already inside the caterpillar – and once it is inside its cocoon, it dissolves into goo, all of it, including its brain, but apart from the wings, and the butterfly grows, attached to the wings.

I sometimes wonder whether a butterfly can remember being a caterpillar.

A Is that meant to be a metaphor?

B No it isn't.

A Oh.

B What the fuck do you mean?

A I don't know. I thought maybe you were trying to tell me something.

B Like what?

A I don't know. About not judging... about...  
About the importance of waiting?  
About waiting to see if you-

B If I what?

A Doesn't matter.  
...

B What's yours?

A Cat.

B Yeah. Thought so.

*Blackout.*

*Music starts to play.*

## **DANCING**

*Lights up.*

*Thirty seconds of dancing.*

*Blackout.*

## **WATER / 5 BASIC NEEDS**

*Lights up.*

A            Okay. So, we have five basic needs: oxygen, water, food, shelter and sleep.

I think we can take oxygen as a given.

B            Oxygen: Done.

A            So, water. An individual needs 4 litres of water a day.

B            That sounds a lot. I never drink 4 litres a day. Of anything. Do you?

A            It's not just to drink. It's for everything: to keep you hydrated and cover all your washing and sanitary needs.

Okay, so 4 litres each, a day. 8 litres per day. 248 litres per month. Call it 260 so we've got some leeway.

B            By your calculations that's only a month.

A            Yeah. Let's hope we have figured it out by then, or we will have to ration.

*B starts bringing the water on.*

B            Water: Doing it...

Water: doing it...

*A starts eating cake, watches B bringing the water on.*

A Food: Doing it...

Food: Done.

B Water: Doing it...

Water: Done.

Shelter! Doing it.

*B starts putting up the walls.*

What about sleep. Are you a good sleeper?

A No, I have trouble sleeping.

B Me too. But activity helps.

A Speaking of which.

B What?

A The calculations, they might be a bit crude.

B So we need more water?

A No. We have enough water. It's a matter of equitable distribution.

B Four litres each a day sounds pretty equitable.

A But we're different sizes.

B So?

A It's going to take different amounts of water to keep us properly hydrated.

B Not that different.

A Not on a daily basis – but over a month. I mean if we're both drinking the same amount of water and one of us gets progressively more dehydrated, that could get us into a dangerous situation. Cumulatively.

B So we'll drink when we're thirsty.

A Yeah, but the amount of water you want to drink, though, isn't necessarily the same as the amount of water you actually need.

B So we'll be responsible.

A Will we, though?

B Will you?

A Yes.

B Then so will I.

A And you'll wash?

B Of course I'll wash.

A You won't drink your drinking water and then some of your washing water and then wash with my drinking water?

B No.

A Because I'd rather you stank than I went thirsty.

B What if I want my washing water for something else?

A Like what?

B Maybe I want to save it up, make a paddling pool.

A Out of what.

B Or pour a week's worth of washing water down the steps to create an attractive water feature.

A You can't.

B Or save all my water for a couple of weeks and try to get by on recycling my own piss?

A You can't.

B Why not?

A It's detrimental.

B To who?

A Both of us.



B So I don't actually own my allocated share of the resources available then?

A We both own it.

B Half each?

A Yes, but in terms of responsibility we share it.

B We don't own it then.

A We own it insofar as it doesn't affect the other.

B Right.

So, not actually at all.

*Blackout.*

## **REPEATING**

*Lights up.*

A Why do you keep repeating everything I say?!

B Why do you keep repeating everything I say?!

*Blackout.*

*Lights up.*

A It's not funny you know.

B It's not funny you know.

*Blackout.*

*Lights up.*

A Ahhhhhhh!

B Ahhhhhhh!

*Blackout.*

*Lights up.*

A You are the most stunning, intellectually stimulating and incredibly caring person I know.

B            Okay, I'll stop.

A            Okay, I'll stop.

*Blackout.*

*Lights up.*

B            Oh, you are funny

A            Oh you are funny

*Blackout.*

*Lights up.*

B            If you think you are annoying me, you're wrong.

A            If you think you are annoying me you are wrong.

*Blackout.*

*Lights up.*

*They stand and stare at each other for a moment. Obviously still annoyed.*

*They start to build the STOOLS.*

### **WHO DO WE LET IN?**

A            I think we may need other people.

B            Unlikely.

A            OK. What if I wanted to invited them?

B            Are you sick of me?

A            What?

B            Already? You're already sick of my company.

A            No. That's not what this is about.

B            Well why are we talking about inviting someone else?

A            We're not. We're just. Preparing,

B OK. Preparing. Seems pointless.

A No, it's about investing in the future.

B Of what?

A Our. I don't know. Our decision-making. The ease of our decision-making.

B So we'll pre-decide?

A Yes, in a way.

B Based on what? I mean these people, whoever they are, they're all individuals. They're a complex web of interrelated views and experiences and reactions-

A But some of those reactions are immediately incompatible with...

B With what?

A Our stability. Happiness.

B But there might be other attributes that outweigh them.

We should probably imagine every single person in the world and make an individual judgement, yeah? Since we don't know who's actually going to turn up.

A We can do it by type.

B That's a bit general.

A Not type of person. Type of behaviour.

B What kind of behaviour?

A You choose.

B Would we let in a misogynist?

A No.

B Racist?

A No.

B           What if it was a racist who was the same colour as we are?

A           They're still a racist.

B           We might not notice.

A           It's the racism that's the problem, not who it's directed at.

B           But if they're the same colour as us we might not even realise they're a racist.

A           We'd ask them.

B           What, like an interview?

A           Yes. Or a conversation.

B           'Are you a racist?'

A           More subtle than that, but yes.

B           'Have you ever been in a reggae band?'

A           Well, more of a nuanced conversation.

B           And anyway, what if they were a racist, but they didn't talk about it, because there was no need to, and they were really good at cooking. Or massages.

A           Would you be comfortable getting a massage from a racist?

B           As long as they didn't try to talk to me about their beliefs.

A           What if they did though?

B           I'd tell them to shut the fuck up.

A           What about free speech?

B           Fuck free speech. Last time I looked we didn't have a constitution in here.

A           What if their arguments are so persuasive they infect us with their terrible ideology?

B           You think your beliefs are that shaky? Interesting.

*Pause.*

B           A clown.

A           Fuck off.

B           I like clowns.

A           If a clown sets foot in here I will kill it with this fucking stool.

B           I thought you said violence was wrong.

A           You convinced me there are some circumstances when it isn't.

B           Soldier.

A           Do they have a gun?

B           They're a trained killer, either way.

A           Not if they're a mechanic or something. Not all soldiers are violent.

B           Exactly. Do you see the problem?

*Pause.*

A           Well then it's just you and me for now isn't it?

B           Looks like it.

A           Let's talk about it later.

*Blackout.*

*Lights up.*

A           Well then it's just you and me for now isn't it?

B           Looks like it.

A           Let's talk about it later.

*Blackout.*

*They put the stools in position.*

*Lights up.*

## SEX RULES

- A           What do you think about sex?
- B           I quite like it.
- A           I mean with me.
- B           Sex with you? Me and you having sex?
- A           Yes.
- B           I've not thought about it. It didn't seem an option, not on the table so to speak, to think of you as sexual.
- A           Thanks.
- B           No that's not what I meant.
- A           We could try and make it fun. Think of the health benefits.
- B           We will need to procreate if we are to survive. This has to be sustainable.
- Okay, in the morning or at night or in the afternoon?
- A           All those in favour of the evening say 'aye'.
- A & B       Aye.
- B           On the floor, the table or up against the wall?
- A           There's the stairs.
- B           Don't over complicate things.
- A           All those in favour of the table say 'aye'.
- A & B       Aye.
- B           That's decided then.
- A           Yes, when do these rules come into effect?
- B           Later.

*Blackout.*

*Lights up.*

## VIDEO

B            Activate Processing.

Attempt number 350.

Just us and the camera. It's almost romantic.

And it's beautiful here. So beautiful. You can understand why it's important to so many people. This is a huge place. Not just the flatness spreading to the distant mountains but the vast bounded dome of it. The horizon meeting the sky so perfectly, creating a space for ideas to take root and be clung to. To explain inexplicable things. Why a particular rock seemed to move in the distance, or a certain sound at night that almost definitely wasn't the wind or a piece of ground suddenly on fire after a storm. People had different theories about why these things happened. And over time these theories diverged.

And here we are, he thinks. Just him, and me, and the camera. Me kneeling here and him standing there and that camera, and these words I don't believe, that nevertheless, I have to say.

He has had nothing to do, the past few days, than memorise the words, and contemplate the landscape. Late at night they have almost been like lovers. They have stayed awake long after everyone else.

In the remnants of a house, under a corner of tarpaulin, they have crouched in the corner together in quiet conference, and every night the same speech has introduced it. He has listened to the same flat statement. These are just some words you will have to learn. You do not have to believe them, and I promise you, you will not have to say them, and if you do find yourself saying them, one day, out there on the desert floor, I promise you it will be for show only, that nothing bad will happen. And every night after that flat statement, before the repetition of the words began, he has asked the same question. He has asked, what do you hope to gain by this, and the answer has always been, it is not about gaining or losing anything. Victory is inevitable. And he has bitten his tongue to stop himself replying, you do know, don't you, they are saying that in reverse, five thousand miles away?

And now he has to look at the camera, and the words have become so drummed into him they are automatic.

And he chooses to believe. He chooses to believe what he has been told about this being somehow not real. Just for show.

He says the words. Slowly and deliberately. So he will not be asked to say them again. He talks about pilotless drones shredding children like burst balloons. He talks about our people and their people. He talks about blood and sacrifice and warns that this war will not stay here. It will come to his homeland.

And he realises he means all this. But it is only half the story.

He wants to say, nobody will win this until we realise it can't be won. And we are all wrong for believing in our own moral strength so blindly and weakly, that we cannot stand the idea of an alternative.

And he feels the knife, rather than sees it.

And he tries to say – no-one gets heaven. Not you, not me, not any of us. But it is already too late.

End Recording.

*During the previous speech A has cleared the table of tools and poured themselves a glass of water.*

### **“CAN YOU?”**

A            Can you scuba dive?

B            No.

A            Can you speak another language?

B            No.

A            Can you cook the perfect paella?

B            No.

A            Can you lip read?

B            No.

A            Can you tell what I'm thinking?



B No.

A Can you roller blade?

B No.

A Can you tell twins apart?

B No.

A Can you sing?

B No.

A Can you dance?

B No.

A Can you cry?

B No.

A Really?

*Blackout.*

*Lights up.*

A Really?

*Blackout.*

## **STEPS**

*Lights up.*

*A is walking up and down the steps.*

B 521.

522.

523.

*Blackout.*

## **SCREAM**

*Lights up.*

*A and B facing each other. They scream.*

*Blackout.*

## **MISSED IT**

*Lights up.*

*A and B facing each other, eyes closed. Nothing happens.*

*Blackout.*

## **DRINKING WATER**

*Lights up.*

*B drinks some of A's water.*

*Blackout.*

## **VOTING**

*Lights up.*

B I drank some water. I was thirsty.

A You've used your water for today.

B I used some water.

A You used my water.

B Which neither of us actually own.

A Which we both own.

B So you can drink mine if you want.

A I think we need to agree some rules.

B Okay. If you want.

A So I propose we vote. We both get equal say.

B Okay.

A Is it okay to drink someone else's water?

B Yes.

A No.

A tie.

B So let's just carry on as we were.

A No. No. For a start that's a state of affairs that one of us finds fundamentally oppressive. And you need a majority to pass a law.

B Do you?

A In any developed society, yeah. And anyway, the First Past the Post System is notoriously unrepresentative.

B Why?

A People don't vote.

B We just had a one hundred percent turnout.

A Well that aside, it doesn't work when an even split is a virtual certainty.

B Unless one of us changes our mind. Do you want to change your mind.

A No. Do you?

B No.

A Then we need something more like Proportional Representation.

B We know the proportions: fifty percent and fifty percent. They're very well represented.

A A more subtle system then. Something less black and white. An Instant Run-off Vote.

So, this time we rank all of the options in our order of preference. If there's no clear winner from first votes, then we take second preferences into account as well.

Is it okay to drink someone else's water?

B Yes.

A No.

That's 1 vote each. So, what is your second preference?

B 'None of the Above.' What's yours?

A 'None of the Above.'

For goodness' sake. For first choice you voted Yes, so that's 25%, and I voted No, so that's 25%, and we both voted 'None of the Above' so that actually wins with 50% of the vote.

B So the majority opinion is to start again.

A Is it okay to drink someone else's water?

B Yes.

A No.

That's 1 vote each. So, what is your second preference?

B 'None of the Above.' What's yours?

A 'None of the Above.'

For goodness' sake. 'None of the Above' actually wins with 50% of the vote.

B So the majority opinion is to start again... we could do this forever.

A Okay, I've got it. We need a more complex system. Not just one that can replicate the variety of group opinion, but one that recognises the subtlety of individual opinion within the group. One with more options.

Is it okay to drink someone else's water?

In all circumstances.

In some circumstances.

In no circumstances.

B In some circumstances.

- A In no circumstances.
- In some circumstances: fifty percent.  
In no circumstances: fifty percent.
- B You're stating the results as if they're going to tell you something you don't already know.
- A That's because I can't get the voting system to replicate the true balance of our opinions. We need something more like a questionnaire.
- Right. This time we can vote 1, 2 or 3 depending on how strongly we feel about the issue.
- Is it okay to drink someone else's water?
- B Yes, 3.
- A No, 3.
- But you're just spending all your votes because you can. There are no consequences. So you're still representing your opinion in black and white.
- So. I would like your true opinion.
- Please respond to the following statement by choosing an option from the scale:  
Very Strongly Agree  
Strongly Agree  
Moderately Agree  
Neither Agree Nor Disagree  
Moderately Disagree  
Strongly Disagree  
Very Strongly Disagree
- Okay?
- B Okay.
- A 'It is never acceptable to drink someone else's water without their permission.'
- Do you...
- B Very Strongly Disagree.
- A The problem is, it seems to me, is that you're not taking this seriously.

- B I'm taking it very seriously.
- A Actually – that's it – that's the problem. You're taking it too seriously. You don't care this much about the 'right' to drink my water.
- B The water drinking is just this particular instance. This is precedent-setting. If we come up with a system designed to allow you to get the result you want, that could be highly problematic further down the line, when we're voting on more important things.
- A Okay, then let's vote on more important things. That will give us a sense of perspective.
- Let's try this. We have ten votes to cast over the four questions, depending on how strongly we feel about each issue:
- Is killing wrong?  
Is violence wrong?  
Is lying wrong?  
Is it okay to drink someone else's water?
- So. Is killing wrong?
- B What are you voting on that?
- A Uh-uh. What are you voting on that?
- B I'm not voting on that.
- A You're not voting on that? You don't think that killing is wrong?
- B I do, but I know you do too, so I'm not voting on that.
- A Is violence wrong?
- B I'm not voting on that.
- A Is lying wrong?
- B I'm not voting on that.
- A Is it okay to drink someone else's water?
- B Yes it is. 10 votes.

A No it's not. 10 votes.  
No progress.

B No shit.

A The problem is, it should be a secret ballot...

B Like a proper election.

A Like a proper election.

B They have public debates before "proper elections."

A Yes. We should do that. We should state our positions first.

B And if the two of us do that, as we have been doing, then we pretty much know what each other is going to vote so it can't be a secret ballot.  
  
You already know that I'm not going to vote to make drinking each other's water wrong, because sometimes we'll need to.

A Hang on. Why are we voting to make drinking each other's water wrong?

B You started it!

A No. I mean, why aren't we voting to make drinking each other's water right? We agree we need a decision making process, yes?

B Yes.

A And as you say, we'll have had a debate and know what each other thinks. So if we know we agree, then we won't need to vote.

B You wanted to –

A I know I know. Hear me out. But if we disagree, then we can't vote to change anything, because there's just two of us, and we have equal say. But who decides what the situation is that needs changing? We ended up voting to make drinking each other's water not okay. Which means we're starting from a position that assumes that it's allowed.

- B Because I'd already done it.
- A Because you'd already done it. But what if we'd voted before you did it? The norm would be that it doesn't happen. That it's not okay.
- You would suggest a vote: it should be okay to drink someone else's water. You'd vote
- B Yes.
- A I'd vote...
- B No.
- A No change.
- B So who decides what is the norm?
- A We take turns. This week I decide. Next week it's your turn.
- B A dictatorship?
- A A clear direction.
- B So why not just make all the rules like that. Take it in turns to decide?
- A Well we could do. But then I'd make all the rules this week, and then next week you'd change them back. And we're stuck in a loop. Again.
- B Well at least you would have things the way you want half of the time.
- A Or you get to pass the rules you want when you're in charge, but they have to stay. You can only make new rules when it's your turn.
- B But whoever goes first will just make all the rules they need, get things exactly how they want them. There's no fair way of deciding who goes first.
- A We'll flip a coin, we'll play for it. Or how about Rock Paper Scissors?

*They play. A wins.*

- B Best of three.



- A           Get lost.
- B           Paper Scissors Stone is always best of three.
- A           It's not always anything. If you want best of three, or best of five, or first to ten or whatever, you have to state that before play has started. Before the count. And it's Rock Paper Scissors, not Paper Scissors Stone.
- B           It's Paper Scissors Stone and it's best of 3 or I don't recognise the result.

*They continue playing, B wins.*

- B           Okay, I'm in charge. It's okay to drink someone else's water.
- A           Hang on. What if I don't recognise your authority?
- B           This was your idea!
- A           Yes, but if I don't like your leadership, I might rebel.
- B           By doing what? Refusing to drink my fucking water?

*Blackout.*

## **FLY**

*The sound of a fly buzzing around.*

*Lights up.*

*A is sitting on a stool or the stairs. B is not there.*

*The fly continues to buzz.*

*Blackout and buzzing stops.*

## **WAKING UP**

- A           Activate Processing.
- Attempt number 351.
- She wasn't expecting to wake up here.

She inches her way out of the sleeping bag, and stands up. Barefoot, in a long t-shirt. The glass tumbler beside her has fallen, and come to rest against the skirting board. The others are around her. Still in their sleeping bags. None of them awake. All laid out in the painted white room across the wooden floorboards.

She picks up the envelope that was resting on her chests whilst she slept and opens it.

She unfolds the single sheet inside and reads her own handwriting as if she has never seen it before.

Nothing in the letter makes sense the way it did yesterday. They all composed their own messages: heartfelt, individual, addressing friends or family members most of them had not seen in years, or the world in general.

And what she reads echoes in her head like the ravings of a lunatic. Like someone in the grip of a vision. About the signs. The fact that they stood on street corners and nobody listened. That they wrote to the television stations and the radio stations and nobody listened. That their youtube channel remained unwatched and the warnings and instructions that they painted on buildings beside the railway tracks and on the banners they hung from the upper tiers of stadiums, that these things were all ignored. That they had the answer and nobody listened.

And the triumphant sign-off, which they had all written their own version of, I guess. "You had your chance. We had it worked out, and we are going to a better place. Our true spiritual forms are waiting beyond the orbit of the moon, and we willingly and happily leave these broken and useless physical shells behind."

Billions on this planet, and the only ones who could really hear, she had thought, who knew truly where we were headed, were the people in this house.

And what echoes in her head is that this was all a lie. Because if it was not, then all these empty shells around her are gone and she is trapped here in her body. She was somehow not worthy.

But it is a lie. They are all dead, and somehow, somehow she was spared. And that is worse.

The air in the room is so still. She should probably walk to the window and slide it up and open. She should put both of her hands around the handles at the bottom of the frame and heave it up to let some air in. She should probably use her living, imperfect body to do that.

But right now she cannot move. She thought they had the answer. She really did. But it has gone.

End Recording.

## 1 TO 10

*B comes back in.*

B            Look. I've been thinking. We should have equal say. We can't just keep talking. We need to keep track.

A            Keep track?

B            Yes, of how much we're talking.

A            You mean counting?

B            Yes, counting. Making sure we say the same number of words.

A            Counting how many words we say? Are you serious?

B            How else do you propose we measure "Equal Say"?

And we don't just measure it, we ensure that we have equal say as we go on – we distribute the word allowance evenly.

A            Well you seem to be doing most of the talking now.

B            We haven't started yet. I'm just proposing -

A            We're not counting anything previous to this?

B            No.

A            Because I'm pretty sure you've talked a lot more than me.

B            We have to draw a line under it.

A            Why?

B For the sake of our future harmony.

A So we're not going to address any of the inequalities of the past?

B What fucking inequalities?

A That you've spoken more than I have.

B Well since we can't put a precise figure on it, no.

A ...okay. Fire away.

B From the point we decide to do this, we get the same amount of words to say. And because we don't want to manage incredibly large sums all the time, I propose it goes like this. We each take it in turns to speak, and we start by only saying one word each, and then we get two each, and so on, up to a point we get to say ten words each, and then we re-set back to one so things don't get unmanageably large. Does that make sense?

A What?

B Good.

A No, what?

B Yes. Exactly.

A No, what are –

B Just three words!

A 'Just three words?' What?

B Yes! And that's four.

A Oh, I see! Four words.

B Five! You're doing really well.

A It seems to be coming naturally.

B The Rules should feel natural, helpful.

A Okay. Well it doesn't seem so bad.

B It is almost like a normal conversation.

A Yes, it allows us to have different opinions.

B We can discuss things. The things that matter.

A That feels like it's something we're meant to do.

B Yes, that's Rule Two: Respect different points of view.

A Which will help, because there is plenty more to do.

B Yes, plenty to keep us busy. Yes. That's right. True.

A Although...

B What?

A Hang on.

B What's up?

A Does it have

B "Does it have"?

A to be in order?

B What's wrong with that?

A It makes it difficult sometimes.

B Difficult to what? To talk?

A Yes. Having to cut short a

B Why do you keep doing that?

A sentence because I don't have any words

B Oh, I see what's going on now.

A left in my turn, but still plenty to

B You're stopping mid-sentence because you're out of words.

A say, because I want to explain a more complex

B Actually, fitting sentences to the word count is tricky.

A thought than can be explained in less than ten words.

B But if we pull together we can make it work.

A See!

B What?

A That's it.

B That's what?

A That's the problem.

B The problem with...?

A The problem with this.

B With having a conversation?

A Not a conversation. "Equal say."

B But Equal Say is important!

A You don't have to tell me!

B It is a right! It's fundamental.

A This way of implementing it is unhelpful.

B How do you mean? It is working.

A Having to be even holds us both back.

B I think it helps us to keep up.

A But if I want to explain something more complex

B ...more complex? That sounds interesting. Go on, I'm listening.

A You're not! You're interrupting! And I have to let you.

B Is a conversation not just two people interrupting each other?

A No!

B No?

A Sometimes you

Just have to  
shut up and listen!  
Let the other person talk.  
Otherwise the numbers will enslave us.  
I mean, look at your face now...  
I know what you're worrying about right now.  
Counting! I know, I've had more words than you.  
Fifty six more words. But you can have some credit!

But the credit is going to cripple you. Cripple us. Because we'll be counting when we talk. We'll stop ourselves from saying certain things, because we won't want to get too far ahead and give the other person too much too much to play with. It's just too much of a game, even if we co-operate. A game that indulges the worst parts of us, trying to out-manoeuvre each other.

I want to be able to say what I want when I want to say it and you know what? I want to listen to you! When you want to talk, I want to let you. I don't want to be worrying about how many words you're using, I want to be thinking about what you're saying. There's no point having equal say if we're not listening to each other.

B            Actually, you're right. It was quite nice just letting you talk for a bit, then.

*Blackout.*

*Lights up.*

*A and B sit in silence for a long time.*

*A stands up and starts to leave the room.*

A            I didn't think paradise was going to be this boring.

*Blackout.*

*Lights up.*

## **BRIDGE**

A            Activate Processing.

Account number 352.

He stands between the river and the road. Where the city meets the water. He is full of righteous fire.

There are birds here. And they perch on the cables of the bridge that fan out and downwards from the tops of its towers to connect to the roadway below. They are large birds, built for wide river estuaries like this, and sometimes they are his only audience. He stands by the on-ramp, where it starts to slope upwards.

Sometimes children make rude gestures at him from passing cars. Sometimes adults do the same. A few times a day a truck will honk its horn. A few times a day the police will drive past, and they slow, but they never stop. They used to stop, but he has never done anything dangerous. It isn't easy to stop on this stretch of road, or safe. It isn't easy to merge back into the traffic again. He admires them for trying.

It is hot. The sun is at its highest. There is a breeze coming across the river from the south where the land is so flat and parched it is officially a desert. The brim of a dirty red baseball cap shades his face. His t-shirt is white. He wears loose black cotton trousers and there are no laces in his shoes, which are soft brown leather. The tops of his feet are pink and veined and exposed, like a picture from a medical textbook.

His eyes glow blue with the fire, and it burns within him, in heart and in brain, with a cold certainty. And all this is painful and the pain is a matter of total indifference. He is speaking, always speaking, and his voice never rises more than a whisper even when the biggest trucks, carrying containers, stencilled with the names of global shipping companies, batter past so close that he could almost touch them.

Nobody ever stops to listen. Nobody even notices he is speaking. The tidal river swells towards him and draws away, The mud is revealed and covered. And the sky is blue, and then a deeper blue and then black and then blue again from the opposite end. And even the drivers who see him every day, every day here in the same spot, think that he must sleep, and the fact is he never does.

He tells the truth.

He tells the truth about everything. The actual truth. That has only ever been imperfectly recorded. That has never been written down in books in a satisfactory way. That has only ever caused death and conflict because it has never been heard well enough to be understood.



He names all the undiscovered animals and how to preserve them from extinction. Which plants contain cures and how to obtain them. He describes in minute detail the design of a fusion chamber and how to harness stars. The deserts blooming and the removal of chemicals from the water. He cools the climate and rebirths the glaciers and the ice-caps and describes the folds in temporal geometry that will take us from one point to another, faster than light. He outlines political philosophies that are so elegant and workable they would end all wars. He methodically lists every form of love and its proper uses.

And one day he will finish. All the instructions will have been delivered, whether anyone was there to hear them or not. They will have been inscribed on the world.

Then he will be able to rest. He will turn away from the road and the city and walk out onto the mud flats, if it is low tide, and be sucked under, or into the river, if it is high tide, and be carried out to sea, and maybe the birds will detach themselves from the cables and follow him. The message will have been delivered. What happens to him afterwards doesn't matter at all.

End Recording.

## ENDING

- A           How many times have we done this?
- B           I think that last account might have been important.
- A           What?
- B           Maybe someone should try and find him.
- A           Er, yeah, maybe.
- B           But in answer to your question, I've lost count how many times. Rewind the recordings.
- A           You know what I daydream about, sometimes?
- B           What?
- A           Someday, I'm going to be sitting in a cafe, you know, and there'll be someone at the same table. A complete

stranger. And they'll look sad. Like strangers often do.  
And I'll say – are you OK? And they'll say...

B Why are they sad?

A It doesn't matter. The point is, I see myself reaching over,  
you know, and taking their hand. And I'll tell them.  
About you, and me, and what we found out. And they'll  
tell someone else, and so on. And it will change  
everything.

B And what do you tell them, in this daydream of yours?  
What do you tell them that we found out?

A Well, I can't remember. It's probably not about the water,  
is it? It would help if you can crack that. But it's not just  
about the water.

B Probably not.

*They are ready to leave.*

A If it's not the water. It's something deeper than that.

B Or maybe it is. Maybe we made a mistake early on.  
There's always tomorrow.

A Yeah. I guess there's always tomorrow.

B There's always tomorrow. Until one day, there isn't.

*As they leave – blackout.*