

SAFE
.....

a drama
by

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CHARACTERS:

HIM	40, expert on something
HER	40, expert on something
SON	14, their son
THEM	his friends
FRIEND	her female friend
COUNSELLOR	60, emergency in-home psychology counsellor
COLLEAGUE	his colleague
SUPERVISOR	35, the supervisor of counsellors, female face on screen
DR. MARMADUKE	expert on sudden madness, male face on screen
TV PRESENTER	female face on screen

All scenes take place in their flat. All the actors apart from the son are wearing smartglasses and smartwatches. Every so often we can hear the noise of a passenger plane flying over the building.

Counsellor

HIM enters with his face buried in the palms of his hands. He throws himself into an armchair that starts humming and adapting to his body. He gets out of it with disgust, but then gives in. He tries to sit right at the edge of the seat, leaning forward, his face still in his hands.

The doorbell rings.

His smartglasses that he has in his shirt pocket buzz.

The ringing persists, so do his glasses.

HIM: Come in!

The ringing and the glasses both stop at the same time.

The counsellor enters.

COUNSELLOR: Good safety!

HIM: Ditto.

COUNSELLOR: May I take a seat?

He nods.

The counsellor sits down.

CHAIR: Connecting to your home abode ... loading preferences ... Complete.

The chair hums as it adapts to his shape.

The counsellor looks with compassion at the miserable figure in front of him who fans out his fingers and looks through them.

HIM: What now?

COUNSELLOR: To start with, you ought to know that for security reasons this conversation is being recorded and will be filed.

He nods and lowers his hands from his face.

COUNSELLOR: Let us begin. We receive billions of pieces of data every second. There is far too much for us to follow. All we are capable of monitoring are

deviations along anticipated patterns. There is a zone of invisibility in the statistical average. For as long as you and your activities remain within it, you do not exist for the system. As soon as you come out of this zone ...

HIM: I didn't know.

COUNSELLOR: What?

HIM: About the car. I didn't know. I thought I was driving.

COUNSELLOR: Did you not read the manual?

HIM: No.

COUNSELLOR: Nobody does. You probably don't know that there is an umbrella in the door in case you need one, if you get caught out in the rain?

HIM: That's in the manual too?

COUNSELLOR: Yes?

HIM: So I get an umbrella, but I don't get to drive?

He buries his face in his palms again.

COUNSELLOR: This will sound like a real stereotype, but it does hold: talk to me, it will make it easier.

He stares at the counsellor for a long time.

HIM: I was driving towards that corner ... as I do every day. And then ... it wasn't a thought, it was a decision. Everything was clear to me, I suddenly felt whole.

On the corner, instead of slowly sliding the steering wheel to the left, I turned right, towards the cliff with all my strength.

I think I smiled as I did it.

The counsellor checks the screen on his smartglasses.

COUNSELLOR: I am looking at your test results. Your adrenalin levels are still very high. I must stay with you because emotions are like wildfire. Something happens to someone, or even worse, person A does something to them, then they, full

of chemicals, take revenge on person B who has nothing to do with the matter but happens to be there, unable to defend themselves.

He listens to him, staring emptily ahead

HIM: And nothing. Nothing happened. I turned the wheel towards death, but the car continued on its usual homebound course. I really believed I was the one driving it.

COUNSELLOR: Driving is far too dangerous a pursuit. We cannot allow just anyone to undertake it and you well know that everyone passes the test.

HIM: Why do I then even turn that bloody wheel? Why am I made to live with the illusion that I am, if nothing else, at least handling my own vehicle?

COUNSELLOR: Because you live in a democracy and have a free will.

HIM: By not being able to kill myself with my own car!

COUNSELLOR: Democracy and free will cease to exist at the point when you could do harm to yourself or someone else, that is one of the achievements of civilization. Life used to be poor, repugnant, cruel and short - that is not what we want to return to, is it?

HIM: No. Probably not.

COUNSELLOR: Would you visit a dentist from the Middle Ages?

HIM: No.

COUNSELLOR: Well, you see then. Do you not agree that safety is the utmost value?

HIM: Of course.

COUNSELLOR: And you understand that, for a long time now, the danger with this epidemic of sudden madness has not been coming from outside, but from within? That people who until yesterday were quite normal ... To trust is human, to control is safe. Do you not agree?

HIM: But, the way things are now ...

COUNSELLOR: How are things now?

HIM: I don't know ...

He tries to find the right words and the counsellor waits patiently.

COUNSELLOR: An empty and stupid joke, as an ancient writer once said?

HIM: Yes.

COUNSELLOR: There was another writer a long time ago who was unable to continue to write because of the pain that his kidney stones caused him. Were he alive today he would ...

He snaps his fingers.

COUNSELLOR: ... sort it out instantly. The history of mankind is a series of suffering caused by nature. But nature itself is twofold, the one out there and the one inside us. The former was what God talked about when he offered it to man to control. He never even mentioned the latter, so perhaps he kept this domain for himself, something for him to rule over?

Technology has helped us to begin to conquer external nature and there was a period when it appeared there was nothing that would prevent our unlimited expansion: the Moon, Mars, the stars! Then we stopped. It couldn't happen, we are too small for the vastness of the universe.

Then we turned inwards, to the microcosm in which we are the greatest dimension. If we are unable to move stars and sort out space, at least we can make ourselves safe.

As things stand, our world is the safest it has ever been through all its history. (to himself) For those who rule it also. (a pause) How are you feeling?

HIM: Let's get this over. Will you prescribe me pills?

COUNSELLOR: Not me. The computer that is monitoring your responses.

The counsellor points to the smartwatch on his patient's wrist.

HIM: So you don't make decisions either?

COUNSELLOR: No, because that would allow the possibility of making a mistake.

HIM: Why did you come then?

COUNSELLOR: Because you are in need of a comforting conversation with a fellow human being.

HIM: Are you taking the piss or do you consider me a complete idiot?

His glasses start beeping. The counsellor sighs.

COUNSELLOR: Tell me how you are feeling?

HIM: But you can get everything from your display.

COUNSELLOR: Numbers, chemistry, biology, everything. But, did you know, when I mentioned the Moon just now ... When the first astronaut returned from it he compiled the most precise report, filled in the most complex forms they could think of. People were then able to read these and applaud science. But there was a film director who said: "I hope that next time they will send a poet up there so he will be able to tell us what it is really like."

HIM: What do you want from me?

COUNSELLOR: How are you feeling?

HIM: Bad.

COUNSELLOR: Please elaborate. When did you start feeling this way?

HIM: Two, three years ago, I don't know.

COUNSELLOR: Your blood analysis does not show any deviation. Nor do your regular brain scans. Until we build more accurate devices we are calling this the miracle of consciousness. Do you recall how it all began?

HIM: No.

COUNSELLOR: Perhaps with a feeling of exclusion, loneliness? As somebody once said to me, as if you are the last atom in an entirely empty universe?

HIM: A little, perhaps. But ...

COUNSELLOR: What about insensitivity? I can see from your records that you never used needles, never burnt yourself, or caused yourself pain in any other way.

HIM: I began to feel like an observer.

COUNSELLOR: Damaged nose due to hitting it against the wall twenty-five months ago, was that due to this?

HIM: Yes.

COUNSELLOR: Were you checking that you were not just a ghost?

HIM: Yes.

COUNSELLOR: Did you feel dead?

HIM: No, I don't think. It was just ... Every time I saw a report on TV about victims of explosions and how modern technology helps them, I saw their prosthetics and ...

COUNSELLOR: You wanted to have arms and legs like them?

HIM: Yes.

COUNSELLOR: Be entirely like that?

HIM: Yes.

COUNSELLOR: I understand. Dead and yet living bodies have always excited man. Vampires, zombies; the paradox of contemporary civilization lies between these two fictitious creations: people want to first be forever young and then forever dead, never living and adult. Now their hopes are pinned on technology that would make them immortal, replace their living parts with dead mechanical ones.

He looks at him with surprise.

HIM: What do you want to say? That I am normal?

COUNSELLOR: Suicide is not normal.

HIM: I thought I could at least decide about this.

COUNSELLOR: As I said, not any longer.

HIM: I would like to go and lie in the bath. Has that computer of yours not got enough data by now, how much longer will this last?

COUNSELLOR: Not much. Are you aware that now your area of invisibility has automatically shrunken? That even minor deviations will trigger the alarm? If all goes well we will meet again in three months' time and after a successful interview you will once again be granted normal status

HIM: And what am I supposed to do in the meanwhile? How am I supposed to live?

COUNSELLOR: Family comes first, you should never forget this. I can see that your wife and you are trying out parenthood and are taking your final exams. You should concentrate on that goal. We will have to inform her though.

HIM: NO!

COUNSELLOR: Unfortunately it is unavoidable. She must know, just in case the machines fail.

HIM: Does that ever happen? (pause)
All I wanted to do was escape.

COUNSELLOR: You can never escape safety.

BLACKOUT

Son, dinner time

HIM and HER. He sits at the table, his head lowered. She unwraps foil packaging and throws its contents into the microwave. She switched on the device.

She steps towards the table and stares at her husband for a long while.

She hesitates over whether to touch him, to put her hand on his shoulder, but changes her mind. He does not notice anything.

HER: I don't know ...

She is trying to find which emotion to hold on to. She feels sorry for him, but at the same time also angry.

She momentarily glances towards the sliding door to their son's room.

HER: Did the counsellor say anything about how this would affect the test?

He looks up and takes a while to concentrate and get the gist of what she was talking about.

HIM: No ...

HER: He said no, it would not affect it?

HIM: No, he didn't say anything. I forgot to ask.

She briefly bangs her fist on the table. Her smartglasses beep and a red diode light flashes momentarily.

HER: I understand ... that you have problems. I really do understand. But this is important to me. We waited for so long for a child that would really be ours, and you go and ...

HIM: I didn't think about it ... I wasn't my own self. The counsellor will be back next week Or ... I could call and ask.

HER: No, better not. If they didn't say anything about it...

She leans over him. So close their glasses almost touch.

HER: Perhaps you are lost ... I don't know. But this thing is important to me. Even as a little girl I wanted to have children. First a son. I would imagine Christmas dinner, the warm safety of a family, I am busy cooking, getting things ready, but it feels good. When I want to take the plates to the table I realize I can't carry them all at once and at that moment my son stands up and says: 'Mum, I'll do it!' And he starts helping me. He

sets the table, the plates, the cutlery and so on.
And I feel a warmth close to my heart.

She moves away.

HER: You consented to this in our prenuptial agreement?

HIM: I did. It's just that ...

HER: So what was all that yesterday about?

He sighs as if to say, not again!

She sits at the table. They both stare in front of them.
The microwave beeps.

Their SON comes out of his room, without smartglasses or a smartwatch. He walks up to the table, grabs a canapé from the plate without sitting down.

HER: Hey, where are your manners?

The son rolls his eyes, pulls a face, but then puts the food back down and takes a snapshot with his phone before picking it up again and starting to munch on it. He speaks with his mouth full so we can barely understand what he is saying.

SON: And why are we doing this?

HER: What?

SON: This, taking photos.

HER: Because ...

She despairingly looks at her husband.

HIM: It is called etiquette.

HER: Yes, being polite.

SON: Hmm. You mean to say you don't know?

He continues to munch the bread.

His parents stand up and go to the sideboard to prepare the food.

SON: How can you do something without knowing why you're doing it?

She, about to take a plate out of the microwave, stops and turns round with a sigh.

HER: Son, look ...

SON: Come on, admit, you don't know.

HIM: We don't know.

SON (to his mother): Well?

HER: We don't know.

The father sighs, walks to the screen and types something onto it. A series of Old Master still lifes depicting food appear on screen. The date of each painting is shown in the corner.

He uses his hand to flick through the images, one by one, there seems to be no end of them.

She nods approvingly as he does so.

HIM: You see, it's always been like this? 1687 - 1715 - 1821 - ... Satisfied?

SON: Why?

HIM: I don't know. But can you, for once, not spoil our dinner, if you please?

SON: All I wanted to know was why? Why do we need to take snapshots of our food and send them to everyone? Why does everybody need to know what we are eating? You are like sheep. You do things just because everyone did it before you, everyone does it with you and everyone will do it after you.

HIM: I don't know. That's how it is. Why do we dress? Wear shoes? Go to bed? Put on pyjamas? There is many a 'that's how it is' in this world. If every one of us had to think about everything from the beginning, it would take a lifetime to get even as far as the letter A. A-A-A-A! There!

He goes to the microwave, throws in the plate and angrily presses the button.

His glasses beep and a red led light flashes on them.

She calmly holds his arm and he shakes her off. The glasses beep again.

HER: Calm down!

HIM (to her): Yes ... yes!

The led light on his glasses is still flashing.

She turns towards their son.

HER: Please kid, ... look what you've done to your father now ...

SON: I'm no longer a kid. Article sixty-three states that you are not allowed to humiliate me or make me feel guilty in any way.

HER: I'm not trying to make you feel ...

SON: You are too! You do know I can report you?

Now her glasses too start beeping and flashing red.

SON: Article one states that all children should have an equal sense of safety, something you two are unable to provide. I see you both as unstable. If you don't want to listen to me, at least listen to your glasses.
Are they beeping?
Yes, they're beeping!

His father's glasses emit a consecutive sound, he grabs the edge of the table and holds onto it for a long time. The frequency of the beeps decreases, but the sound does not disappear.

HER: Please, let's stop! Please! Let's have dinner ...

SON: I'm no longer hungry. I'm going out.

HER: How? But it's dark already!

HIM: Where are you going?

SON: That's none of your business.

HIM: Of course it is, we are responsible for you.

SON: Because you signed? Is that it? Not because you love me?

HER: We signed because we loved you!

SON: Oh, so you don't any more!

HER: That's not what I meant! Don't twist my words!

Her glasses start beeping again.

HIM: Stop! Look what you're doing to your mother!

SON: Aha, that's article sixty-three! I will report you both!

Father's glasses start beeping wildly again.

He bangs his hand on the table.

HIM: That's enough! Don't - twist - around - everything - I - say!

The son imitates his staccato manner:

SON: You - can - not - hit- me!

HIM: I didn't want to hit you!

SON: I will report you for violating article one twenty!

HIM: I didn't hit you!!

His glasses beep away, flashing.

HER (to him): Please!

She turns to their son.

HER: Stop, please!

SON: I'll report the two of you!

HIM: Report me, see if I care!

HER: Stop, please, both of you!

HIM: Don't you have anything to do with this?

HER: Me? What are you shouting at me for now?

HIM: Shouting? Me? THIS IS SHOUTING! NOW I'M SHOUTING!

Both their glasses beep and flash madly.

She points to her smartwatch.

SHE: The readings are going haywire ... Calm down, please! I want the child! Please understand! A real child! We only have 15 days of this left ...! That's all. Endure another 15 days! Please!

BLACKOUT

TV, counsellor

The lights are out. The TV is switched on showing chaotic scenes of pushing crowds.

TV PRESENTER: Yet another victim of sudden madness. John Smith, 43, was preparing sushi and then, all of a sudden, attacked guests at the restaurant. Initial reports estimate two dead and three wounded. With us in the studio is the top expert on the subject, Dr. Leopold Marmaduke. Welcome, Dr. Marmaduke. What's going on? It appears that cases of sudden madness are becoming more frequent?

DR. MARMADUKE: Statistics agree, unfortunately.

TV PRESENTER: Where lies the problem? Why are we, despite all the technology, still unable to prevent sudden madness? Why are we still not entirely safe?

DR. MARMADUKE: As you might be aware, there are two main theories: some say this is a prion disease, others maintain that we are dealing with a genetic disposition which is activated by certain influences from the environment. I support the former. You see, prion diseases have a very long incubation period and cognitive abilities gradually decline without the patient noticing. The only solution would be more accurate technology. More regular and immediate tests.

TV PRESENTER: Our data is now already available to the central health system. Blood is analyzed for every known chemical, at every moment. Quite an achievement in proteomics.

DR. MARMADUKE: That's true, but prions settle in the brain.

TV PRESENTER: So you are in favour of implanting readers inside the brain?

DR. MARMADUKE: Yes.

The screen switches off with a click. The lights come back on. The counsellor moves his hand away from his glasses.

COUNSELLOR: And you talk of... family life ...

HIM: This child ... I understand that children should be born into a safe world. Everything was fine half a year ago when we started the test. An android baby for the first month, a year old by the second month, nursery school during the third, primary school during the fourth month, and ... I get all that. But this last test, an android teenager, this is ... I don't think I can handle this.

COUNSELLOR: Why do you think that?

HIM: Because ...

COUNSELLOR: Because?

HIM: Because I am only doing it for her.

COUNSELLOR: You don't desire a child?

HIM: Eh ... I don't know what I want and what I don't want.
(a pause)
Damn robot, thinks it can do anything it wants!

COUNSELLOR: Why?

HIM: Why what?

COUNSELLOR: Why do you think it can do anything it wants?

HIM: Because it is ... just bits of plastic and a few circuits ... Because it is ...

COUNSELLOR: Not alive?

HIM: Yes, not alive.
(a pause and then an outburst)
So it thinks it can do anything it wants!

The counsellor nods.

COUNSELLOR: Quite the opposite, it is doing everything precisely as specified in its inbuilt programme. Were he alive, he could do something unexpected. Look at our world, this water this earth, no life for billions of years - and then suddenly something unexpected happens, life.
(a pause)
Life starts where predictions end.

A long silence, then the counsellor sighs.

COUNSELLOR: I would do you good to socialize with friends, human contact is irreplaceable.

HIM: You mean, personal contact?

COUNSELLOR: Yes.

He thinks about this strange idea.

HIM: Social networks are not enough?

The counsellor sighs heavily and spreads his hands.

BLACKOUT

Fiends, party

HIM and THEM, his friends, all wearing glasses and large wrist devices. Two of them are sitting on the sofa, others are at the table, some are pacing around the flat. Occasionally someone amongst them pauses, gets their phone ready, takes a selfie holding a can of beer pressed up against their face, bearing a broad false smile, as if to say, 'what a great party'.

He opens the fridge door and takes out three cans of beer.

The fridge starts beeping.

FRIDGE: At 21 hundred hours you have an appointment to play squash. With the drinks you have just taken the level of alcohol in your blood would exceed the level allowed according to road safety rules.

He puts the beer back in the fridge and closes the door.

FRIDGE: Thank you.

HIM: Fuck you.

THEM 1: We can each get our own, don't worry.

THEM 1 tries to open the fridge door, but it beeps and does not want to open.

FRIDGE: Unauthorized access.

HIM places the palm of his hand on the front of the fridge.

FRIDGE: Authorization granted.

THEM 1 tries again and the door opens this time. He grabs a beer. The fridge beeps.

FRIDGE: Ministry of Health warning: excessive consumption of alcohol is detrimental to your health.

THEM 1: Fuck you.

THEM 1 tries to take out the can of beer but the fridge will not release it. He pulls at it with great effort.

From the inside of the fridge a different coloured can appears.

THEM 1: Bitch.

The fridge starts beeping wildly, its lights flashing together with the lights on their smartglasses and all other kitchen appliances. A voice resounds from under the ceiling.

VOICE: All swearwords should be gender neutral.

THEM 1: I apologize.

The lights stop flashing and the appliances fall silent.

THEM 1 (to the fridge): Fuck you.

THEM 1 tries to take out the can of beer but the fridge will not release it. He pulls at it with great effort.

From the inside of the fridge a different coloured can appears.

FRIDGE: We suggest you have a non-alcoholic beverage.

THEM 1 persists for a little while, then gives up, grabs the non-alcoholic can and slams the fridge door.

THEM 1: Fuck you.

HIM: I wanted to talk to you about that.

THEM 1: About the fridge?

HIM: No ... Or rather, yes. That also. Don't you ever just have enough? Wouldn't you like to rebel?

THEM 1: I do. I always tell it to fuck off.

HIM: That's not what I meant. Wouldn't it be great if you could drink as much beer as you wanted?

Everybody stops and turn towards him in shock.

THEM: What do you mean?

HIM: Well ...

THEM 2: But, that would be unhealthy!

THEM 3: People used to die because of it!

He desperately turns towards THEM 1 who is standing next to him, holding the can of non-alcoholic beer, staring at him in shock, like everyone else.

THEM 1: Things are right as they are.

HIM: Wouldn't you like another beer?

THEM 1: I would, that's the problem. I can't restrain myself, so somebody else has to. In the old days I would have been long dead, but this way the environment is looking after me.

THEM 2's glasses flash. It's a reminder. He reaches into one of the many pockets on his jacket, opens a box and swallows a pill. They are all used to his continual consumption of medication and ignore him.

THEM 1: But we're all like that, more or less. Could you restrain yourself?

HIM: Yes.

THEM 1: With beer. What about all the rest? Are you even aware of how many things the world is made up of and each one of these can become an addiction? That is what technology is for, to restrain us because we're only human.
Oh, I put that nicely. Hang on, let me tweet it.

THEM 1 takes his phone from his pocket and starts typing on it.

He turns towards the others.

HIM: What I meant to talk about ...

He is looking for the right words.

HIM: How are you?

THEM: Safe.

HIM: I mean, how do you feel?

THEM: Good.

HIM: What does good even mean?

THEY 3: What is it with you? Why are you asking?

HIM: I invited you, because we are friends.

THEM 2: Yes, our profiles on social networks do overlap and psychometric data shows we belong together.

HIM: But do we know that?

THEM 2: What?

HIM: That we belong together?

THEM 2: That's empirical data, quantitative analysis, how can you refute it?

HIM: No, I can't. But ... That is why I called you ... Because I wanted to talk about what is going on in the world.

THEM 2: What IS going on?

HIM: Nothing.

THEM 2: Which means everything is fine. What did you want to talk about?

HIM: Is it not strange that nothing is happening?

THEM 2: Well, not nothing at all. Things are happening that we have become used to, the epidemic of sudden madness, for example.

HIM: Yes, so that we obey everything they tell us to do.

THEM 2: Who?

HIM: I don't know, this fridge, for example.

THEM 2: But it is for our own good!

Another reminder on his glasses. He takes another box from a different pocket and swallows another pill.

HIM: How many pills a day do you take?

THEM 2 blinks and looks at the display in his glasses.

THEM 2: 153. Why?

HIM: And the intravenous infusion, do you still have that once a week?

THEM 2: Yes, you know that coenzyme Q10, phosphatidylcholine and glutathione are not effective orally.

HIM: Wouldn't you rather be without all these pills?

THEM 1: I'm off to the loo.

THEM 1 leaves.

THEM 2: What do you mean? They're keeping me healthy! How many do you take?

He shakes his head.

THEM 2: None? Impossible!

They all surround him and look at him with astonishment.

HIM: Well, almost none.

THEM 3: But you are our age, aren't you on pills?

THEM 2: You still get everything from food?

HIM: I do take vitamins. And Omega 3. And ...

He turns his head in order to read the data from his glasses.

HIM: I take twelve dietary supplements ... But that is not what I wanted to talk about. I wanted ...

THEM: What about antidepressants?

He is embarrassed.

HIM: Only recently did I ...

THEM: Woooow!

THEM 1 returns from the toilet holding a printout in his hand.

THEM 1: Something's wrong with my piss. I need to go to the urologist, the toilet has already given me a printout of the test results and sent the referral to a specialist.
Can you take me?

One of the men gets up and they walk towards the door. One of the recycling bins (the one for packaging) starts beeping.

BIN: Dispose of empty packaging here, warning before fine.

THEM 1 goes to the bin, the lid opens automatically and he throws his can into it.

BIN: Thank you.

THEM 1: Fuck you.

The two men leave.

HIM: I wanted to ...

THEM 3: Hang on, I need to tweet ...

THEM: Me too ...

They all type away on their phones. He looks upon them with despair and then also types something into his device.

THEM 3 lifts his eyes from his phone and it appears to be staring at their host. He turns towards him.

THEM 3: Did you know that somebody in China caught a 9-foot Mekong giant catfish?

HIM: Ah?

THEM 3: *Pangasianodon gigas*, yes. Just been posted.

He indicates his glasses.

HIM: That was another thing I wanted to say ... All your news items are to do with fishing.

THEM 3: Yes. That's what I'm interested in.

HIM: But the world is more than just that. There is also ... economics. History. E ...

THEM 3: That I am not interested in. You can't have everyone being interested in everything.

HIM: So you only chose fish and the world is just fish.

THEM 3: I didn't chose.

HIM: Sorry, I know. All you did was read about it and then the news programme stopped sending you the stuff you never read anyway.

THEM 3: Yes, that is why they are called smart programs.

HIM: Because they keep giving us less?

THEM 3: What use is the lot of it? Do you want to return to the old days when they had to buy all the news printed out in a paper, even if they were only interested in some of it?
What was it you wanted to talk about?

He appears uneasy.

HIM: I ... We are friends ... and my ...

THEM: We need to tweet ...

They all start typing away on their smartwatches again, taking photos, posing in ways that would show a typical good party. Pouting lips, bright smiles.

THEM 2 swallows another pill and approaches the host, comfortingly putting his hand on his shoulder.

THEM 2: Do take pills. It's not that terrifying. The body is all about chemicals, our feelings are chemicals, our thoughts are chemicals. Feeling bad is just a sign that the levels of some chemical are too low or too high. Imagine a micron-sized bundle of elements that are in the wrong place and because of it you feel like the entire universe is upside down. Is it not far more efficient to level out the chemical anomaly rather than start trying to turn the whole world around? By the way, great party!

He pats him encouragingly.

BLACKOUT

The counsellor on counting

The COUNSELLOR is nodding.

COUNSELLOR: I understand. Yes.

He hesitates. He wipes his brow with his hand, cracks his knuckles, the hesitation is becoming painful.

HIM starts looking towards the counsellor with ever greater impatience, slowly moving forward in his chair.

COUNSELLOR: Alright then... I see there is no other way
...

More hesitation.

COUNSELLOR: Look ...
I'd like to tell you something about the age of space flights, perhaps somewhat unorthodox, nevertheless ... In this safe world, could you imagine an astronaut sitting in that confined capsule on top of a rocket with fire gushing out of it, its walls shaking, steel groaning? The entire thing is basically a fuel tank, a firecracker with a tiny fly sitting on top of it.

Can you imagine anything as dangerous as that? Do you ever wonder how they held out? How come they didn't die of fear?

He doesn't know the answer.

COUNSELLOR: They were equipped with tools that block fear. They developed a method that occupies our mind to such an extent that it inhibits the amygdalae in our brain and with it our emotions.

The counsellor shakes his head. He looks at him with surprise.

HIM: And? What are you trying to tell me?

COUNSELLOR: Nothing, of course. You know, in your state a person feels lonely, needs conversation. Not conversation with just anyone, but with a kindred spirit.

Excuse me about all this but yesterday I happened to be reading a book on early space flights and it is still fresh in my mind. I had come across it as a child and I keep returning to it...

I am talking too much. I know that in your desperation you're not at all interested in how those astronauts, alone in their steel ball, without any means of control, left to hostile forces and chances, used to count backwards in sevens from one hundred. Yes, that was all the secret. 100 minus 7 and so on. This is how they set off into space.

Think about it ...

Stay safe!

BLACKOUT

The son and the bunk bed

The SON is sitting at the table, HIM and HER are making dinner. She has her hands full preparing the food and occasionally looks across to their son who sits there bored, staring in front of him.

She goes to the table, barely managing with all the plates. She looks at her son, expecting him to offer a hand.

SON: Can't we hurry this a little?

HIM: You are not going out.

The son lowers his head.

SON: Alright then.

The parents smile.

SON: But I will make a bunk.

HIM: What?

SON: A bunk.

HIM: What kind of a bunk? What for?

SON: I want to make a loft bed, elevate my bed to under the ceiling.

HIM: Why?

SON: I want to.

HER: Alright.

Her looks at her in surprise.

HER: Let's have dinner, we can talk about your bed tomorrow.

SON: No, today.

HIM: Dinner first.

SON: I'm not hungry.

HER: A least have something please. At your age ...

SON: I don't want any!

HIM: Of course you don't, because you're a plain old ... All you are is ...

HER: Don't!

She places her hand on his shoulder, almost crying as she begs him.

HER: Don't! Please don't. Not now! We only have a short while to go! Please!

He takes off his glasses and looks at them, waiting, until they finally start beeping.

The son stares provokingly straight at him.

The father closes his eyes and groans.

SON: I'll order the stuff I need then.

He leaves.

Him and her sit, staring at the door that has closed begin him.

HER: I hate this ... this ... machine.

HIM: Another 14 days.

A pause.

HER: Do you think that this is really what it is like?

HIM: What what is like?

HER: With living ones. With children you give birth to. Ones where you don't get an older version sent to you every month that you have to pretend are yours.

HIM: It's a test ...

HER: How can you be so despondent? So indifferent? No wonder that you wanted to ... escape.

He sticks his fork into the food.

HER: How can you just eat?

He stops eating.

HER: Did you know that all theories of upbringing are based on the work of two educators who were different as night and day? John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau? The former never had any children, the latter had at least five but sent them off to the orphanage soon after birth. If these giants of upbringing could not handle it, how am I supposed to?

As she speaks she picks up her fork and starts eating.
After her first bite he does the same.

She cries out and puts her fork down. Looking at him she catches him mid-bite.

HER: How can you just eat?

BLACKOUT

The counsellor on the secret

The counsellor approaches the chair that instantly adapts to his pre-recorded preferences.

COUNSELLOR: Contact, you must establish contact.

HIM: With whom?

Silence.

HIM: Our son is a robot behaving like a teenager. My wife is a human behaving like a robot. My friends have been chosen by a computer programme and that is all they are good for.

COUNSELLOR: Do you recall what I talked to you about last time?

He looks at him, puzzled.

COUNSELLOR: About the early astronauts?

HIM: How they were scared?

COUNSELLOR: Yes, but they found something that ...

He waits.

HIM: Space suits?

The counsellor shakes his head and sighs.

The sound of an aeroplane flying overhead can be heard. The counsellor looks somewhat longingly up towards the ceiling until all is silent again.

COUNSELLOR: You are not genetically predisposed to suicide, you do not have the SKA2 gene. So it is all in the head.

HIM: I see. But?

COUNSELLOR: A colleague perhaps? Have you ever had any personal contact with any colleagues?

BLACKOUT

Him and the colleague

The COLLEAGUE switches on the TV.

COLLEAGUE: Just let me get connected. I prefer to see it all on a large screen.

He presses some buttons on his smartglasses. A list of data that looks like lab results scrolls down the TV screen. It appears endless.

The colleague starts pointing to the screen with his hand.

COLLEAGUE: There, she's fucking around again! There! She's only doing it because she knows I am monitoring her.

HIM: Why then do you monitor her?

COLLEAGUE: We signed that we could when we got married. Didn't you?

HIM: We did, but ...

COLLEAGUE: Why shouldn't I look. Don't you want to know everything about your wife

HIM: Eh ... never really thought about it.

COLLEAGUE: There, an orgasm! At last!

He briefly turns away from the screen.

COLLEAGUE: I know all about my wife. Show me a load of data and I will instantly know which concerns her.

HIM: But what does she think?

COLLEAGUE: What do you mean, think?

HIM: How does she feel?

They stare at each other, slightly confused.

COLLEAGUE: Don't be silly. This is data, all the rest is speculation. Dear colleague, if you will want more than science can provide, you'll end up miserable.

Do you want us to check on yours as well?

HIM: I've never ...

COLLEAGUE: Now you'll chicken out, or what? Come on, check her!

He hesitates, then starts using the controls on his smartglasses.

The screen flickers and a new set of data appears on the screen.

COLLEAGUE: There, sex! Yours is doing the same as mine!

HIM: No, I don't believe that.

They both lean closer to the screen.

HIM: This is sports!

COLLEAGUE: Yes, great sports for men. Just that you are not the player. Ha, ha!

He stops the flow of data.

HIM: It's sport! Look here.

The colleague checks the data, then admits.

COLLEAGUE: Yes, you're right, it's hard to tell sometimes. Does she do martial arts, why is she this excited?

HIM: No, an exercise bike.

COLLEAGUE: This is not an exercise bike!

He checks and also sees that the colleague is right. Silence.

COLLEAGUE: Come on, let me get back to mine. I don't like leaving her alone.

He switches to the other data.

COLLEAGUE: I knew it. Her potassium levels are down,
and she does nothing about it!

HIM: But her glasses warn her of this.

COLLEAGUE: I know. But she knows I am watching and
leaves it all to me. Without me she is nothing,
and this is how we connect.

He pulls a mobile device from his pocket and starts
shouting into it:

COLLEAGUE: Hellooo! Get on with it, eat that bloody
banana! At your age you should know what an orgasm
does your mineral levels!

BLACKOUT

Her and her friend

HER and her FRIEND sit on a pair of exercise bikes,
peddling slowly. We can hear fairly loud work-out music
playing in the background.

FRIEND: The children are still small. The mortgage on the
house has not yet been paid off. I looked at some
adds, I even went to have a look at a small flat.
It felt great when I was there. Then ... when I
got home. You know how much space we have?

She nods.

FRIEND: You know how much effort I put into setting up our
house, all the furniture? I chose every detail,
every object. And now I am supposed to leave
because of some slut he only sleeps with? I am
supposed to give up all this?

HER: He should leave!

FRIEND: He doesn't want to. He's blocked my authorization
for access to his blood data. This is what they
now call an open marriage.

HER: What will you do now?

FRIEND: I really felt awful. At first I thought it was the
gluten. Then that it was sugar. I have long wiped
meat off the menu, been through a hundred diets,
all I thought about between meals was what I

shouldn't eat, and I still felt ... until ...
(pause)

DO you believe that at the moment you feel most trapped, a new path opens up for you? As if it was sent to you by a guardian angel?

HER: Go on!

FRIEND: My blood results were all over the place. I couldn't sleep, I had sleeping pills delivered, still nothing. Night on end I spent staring at the ceiling, then it suddenly dawned on me. Out of the blue, like a thunderbolt. You will laugh now, but I even thought I saw the flash of light.

HER: And

FRIEND: Do you think the music is loud enough for them not to hear us if they happen to pick this recording?

They put their heads together.

HER: Go on!

FRIEND: It dawned on me that right at this moment ... over there ... in the Centre, animals are being tortured. They are locked up in cages ... And these poor animals lie there ... in a narrow space ... squashed ... they can't even turn around ... and are suffering. Suffering!

HER: That's true, but ...

FRIEND: Trapped! Can't go anywhere! Left at the mercy of those sadists! Get it?

HER: Yes, true. You know something, last night, at dinner, when I was watching ...
(she searches for a word before spitting it out)
my son, sitting at the table, taking the piss, that is what I suddenly thought of. I thought of the Centre and all the animals trapped in there, being experimented on!

FRIEND: Really? You didn't

HER: I did.

FRIEND: Poor animals, really! I have become obsessed with the suffering of these innocent creatures. I can't get it out of my head. I think about them all the time. We people are safe, but these poor animals are just consumer waste. It's just so wrong! I was thinking ...

HER: Tell me!

FRIEND: They feed them on their own kind. When they die, when they kill them, they process them into food and feed the others.

HER: Oh! Oh! I read that they sometimes get diseases of the brain. The brain cannot handle being fed with its dead ancestors. Terrible!

FRIEND: And then I dreamt, or was I awake when I thought of it, I don't rally know ...

HER: Go on!

FRIEND: Most scientists come from this town. Their parents and grand parents were all from here. They are buried in the local cemetery. I dreamt that I was digging, digging deep, the sky was but a tiny patch of blue above me ... Then I used the kitchen blender to grind the bones of their ancestors ... And ...

HER: Go on, tell me!

FRIEND: During the night, I crept into the kitchen at the Centre and mixed their ancestors into their food.

HER: Oh! Oh!

Their glasses begin to beep.

HER: This has unsettled us!

FRIEND: No wonder! The pigs! The scientists, male pigs!

HER: Let's change gear!

They both start peddling faster, their glasses are still beeping madly.

HER: There's nothing we can do about it. The sensors would go wild, even just in the planning stage, let alone when we started digging, grinding, breaking in ...

Their glasses beep louder.

HER: Let's calm down!

FRIEND: We can't!

The beeping becomes more intense. They pedal even harder.

HER: The counsellors will come! Pump us full of sedatives! No secrets from them.

FRIEND: We will just smile stupidly and sit there. And the trapped animals will continue to suffer.

Their glasses are going wild. They also pedal away wildly.

FRIEND: Faster!

The glasses stop beeping.

They put all their effort into peddling as fast as they can.

HER: We must not stop, so we can talk about the animals.

FRIEND: How can we save them?

HER: How can we avenge their suffering on their tormentors?

FRIEND: I can't go on any more.

They almost fall off their exercise bikes. Breathe deeply, trying to catch their breath. They slowly start walking around with their hands up in the air to try and catch as much air into the lungs as possible.

FRIEND: Fucking bastards!

She hits her hand against the cupboard in anger.

The cupboard door opens. Inside the cupboard we see HIM.

BLACKOUT

The counsellor and Jesus

HIM waves his arms excitedly at the COUNSELLOR, they are both standing.

HIM: She has a secret! Something I don't know about and that does not come up in the readings! A secret, do you understand?

COUNSELLOR: I understand. Yes.

He puts his hand across his mouth.

HIM: Have I just betrayed her?

COUNSELLOR: No, dreaming is allowed until you start putting it into effect.
(pause)
What did you feel about this?

HIM: Envy.

COUNSELLOR: I see.

HIM: I would like a secret too.

COUNSELLOR: You have one.

HIM: What?

The counsellor briefly points to the smartwatch, as if to say, it is recording everything. His patient stares at him with suspicion.

COUNSELLOR: Oh, you must have one. How do you think individuality comes about? Imagine the adult human brain being produced in a factory, all coming off the production line identical. Then in one of these brains a neuron connection occurs that is unique, that didn't exist elsewhere. This brain would be different, they would have a secret, they would be individualized.
Because if they told about their secret, all the other brains would make the same connection and they would all be identical again.
This is why we share our secrets with those close to us, to make them more like us.
That is why people confess their secrets on their death bed, this way they take leave from

themselves and so they reach a levelling with death.

When you have no privacy, you have no secrets. Then all that is left for you to do is concern yourself with others; can the soul even exist if it is accessible to all and thus the same with everyone?

HIM: You want to say that I need a secret?

COUNSELLOR: Have we got stuck along the way somewhere? You have one. You just seem not to be aware of it yet.

You can even call that a secret. The sense of being unique. Or being in touch with your own self. Some people call it meaning. Your choice. You will be cured then. Problem solved.

Look, you are not the only one, I have others like you. I would like to end my career with 100% successful cures.

HIM: Is that even possible?

COUNSELLOR: I wasn't until now. But I have made it my purpose.

HIM: Your secret?

The counsellor laughs.

HIM: What about my secret?

The counsellor beckons for him to follow him. They step up to the kitchen sideboard where the coffee machine is.

The advisor fully opens the steam valve so it starts hissing loudly.

The advisor leans across to his patient and shouts into his ear.

COUNSELLOR: WHAT WAS IT THE EARLY ASTRONAUTS DID? WHAT WAS IT?

The diode on his smartglasses flashes red.

He closes the valve and presses his finger against his lips.

COUNSELLOR: When did they start taking account of Jesus' teachings?

HIM: After his death?

COUNSELLOR: That's right. Unfortunately there is no other way.

He is deep in thought.

COUNSELLOR: But you don't believe in him. A pity. religious people are best adapted to the scientific perfection of our civilization, only they find the notion that someone is constantly watching over them, making sure they are safe, as reassuring and common.

BLACKOUT

Her and him

The door to the microwave opens.

MICROWAVE: Dinner is ready.

HIM and HER sit at the table in silence.

The SON appears at the door.

SON: I won't eat. But if you help me with the bunk bed, I will stay for the selfie shot.

HIM: OK.

HER: OK.

The son steps between them, they put on a fake smile, take the shot, each with their own phone, enter the numbers and post the shot.

The son goes into his room, the parents pick up their plates and take them to the table. They sit down and start eating.

Drilling and banging noises come from the room.

HIM: What was your day like?

HER: I can't really remember. Yours?

HIM: Neither can I. Fine probably.

HER: Yes.

HIM: Yes.

They eat in silence.

HER: Will you tell on me?

HIM: Dreaming is allowed until you start putting it
into effect.

(pause)

How would you do it?

They both stop.

HER: I don't know.

HIM: Why did you not talk to me about it, the way you
talked to your friend?

HER: Because you disappointed me.

HIM: How? I could not have, I do everything my glasses
tell me to do. Don't you get the right flowers on
the right occasions? Yellow roses?

HER: I filled in that form when I was twenty. Now I
prefer tulips.

HIM: You didn't tell me.

HER: You should know anyway.

HIM: How? The database has not been updated. Did you
ever tell anyone? Did ever look for tulips on the
web? Look at any pictures of tulips?

HER: No! But in my head ...

HIM: I can't know what's in your head!

HER: Because you look at your screen, not into my eyes.

He is lost for words and doesn't say anything.

HIM: But what are we? The two of us? Just our bodies? A
list of chemicals that we are made up of, is that
all?

I wanted to have a secret. I wanted to rebel!
Just think about it, how can a rebel group even
form when phones listen in to your every
conversation, GPS devices in cars, shoes,
everywhere, follow your every move. All our words,
all our movements, our letters, it's all recorded.
Phones follow us in 3D, wireless networks give
information on our moves. All we are left with are
our thoughts
So I withdrew into myself...
But I found nothing there.

HER: Well, I did, I certainly did!

HIM: Animals?

She nods.

HIM: Can your secret also be a little min?

She nods.

They stare at each other and smile.

BLACKOUT

The supervisor

In the darkness a screen switches itself on. It lights up
the flat and we can see Him sitting in front of the screen.

The face of the female Supervisor of Counsellors appears on
screen.

SUPERVISOR: I wish you good safety!

HIM: Ditto.

SUPERVISOR: I merely wish to inform you that your test
results are excellent and that we are returning
your normal status.

HIM: Where is the gentleman counsellor who came ...

The supervisor stops and hesitates.

SUPERVISOR: I wanted to talk to you about that. We are
getting in touch with everyone he worked with over
the past six months.

A long pause.

SUPERVISOR: He died.

HIM: So why are you calling people like me?

SUPERVISOR: He killed himself.

HIM: Suicide? How?

SUPERVISOR: Sudden madness.

HIM: Him?

SUPERVISOR: Nobody is safe.

HIM: How?

SUPERVISOR: He jumped. A reception for employees on the top of a skyscraper, they were repairing the railings. The place was of course closed to the general public because it was not safe. But nobody thought about the annual meeting of counsellors and supervisors. He started to run, nobody stopped him, he ran towards the door, and, just before he reached it, diverted towards the hole in the railings.

We went over all his recordings and all those close to him. He was whispering something as he ran, but we cannot quite make it out because of background noise. It is possible he once said 86 and once 30, but we are not even certain about that.

HIM: What about the sensors?

SUPERVISOR: Nothing. That's why we are going over all his recordings and talking to everyone. The record from your meeting is strange, barely within the framework of the rules, but then there is this part...

The recording of the counsellor's voice drowned out by the noise of the coffee machine is played back.

SUPERVISOR: What did he say to you then?

HIM: Nothing. He was agitated with the noise the machine was making.

SUPERVISOR: We can detect agitation in our measurements.

HIM: Was he ever agitated with anyone else?

SUPERVISOR: Protection of personal data does not allow me to disclose that to you. I'm sorry, thank you and good safety!

BLACKOUT

Him counting

Him, alone in the flat.

HIM: 86 ... 30 ...

He is not quite sure about it.

The noise of an airplane flying over the building.

HIM: 100! 100!

He starts to laugh.

BLACKOUT

Son fixing his room

We see HER carrying the plates to the table. She looks across to the chair where her son normally sits. He has stayed in his room. Despite this she still places a plateful of food in his place.

HIM: It'll be wasted.

HER: It'll be wasted even if he did eat it.

They sit and eat.

HIM: I have a secret.

She stops.

HIM: Eat. We cannot afford to stand out from the average.

HER: Tell me.

HIM: Let's wait for a few minutes ...

They continue eating. The son shouts from his room.

SON: Pass me a plug!

HIM: What plug?

SON: One of those things you stick in the wall!

HER: You can fetch one yourself.

SON: I'm on the ladder, I can't keep climbing up and down it for every little thing I need. You promised!

The parents try to continue with their meal.

SON: Article two speaks of how children should be helped. I'll report you.

The father's glasses beep.

HIM: I can't take this any more. Sometimes ...

She looks at him with suspicion.

HER: Do you need pills?

HIM: No, that's not what I am talking about. You'll see ... allow him to get you upset too.

She holds back and does not say anything.

SON: Where's that plug? If you promise something you need to keep that promise! What kind of an example are you setting me!!

He stands up and goes into the son's room. He then comes back and sits down.

SON: Pass me the Phillips screwdriver!

HIM: Take ...

She is already getting up. She goes to the son's room. We don't hear any thanks. The sliding door can barely keep up with the traffic.

She returns and picks up her fork.

SON: That's not a Phillips! How dumb you women can be!

She jumps up. Her glasses start beeping.

Her husband grabs her arm to hold her back.

HIM: Count!

HER: What?

HIM: Count backwards by deducting 7 from 100! $100 - 7 = 93$. $93 - 7 = 86$. Come on!

HIM and HER: $86 - 7 = 79$. $79 - 7 = 72$. $72 - 7 = 65$.

The beeping of their glasses slows down.

HIM and HER: $65 - 7 = 58$. $58 - 7 = 51$. $51 - 7 = 44$.

The beeping starts to fade out.

HIM and HER: $44 - 7 = 37$. $37 - 7 = 30$. $30 - 7 = 23$. $23 - 7 = 16$. $16 - 7 = 9$. $9 - 7 = 2$. $100 - 7 = 93$. $93 - 7 = 86$. $86 - 7 = \dots$

They repeat until their glasses stop beeping entirely.

HER: $16 - 7 = 9$. $9 - 7 = 2$. $100 - 7 = 93$. Can I say something?

HIM: You can. $93 - 7 = 86$.

HER: What's going on?

HIM: We are blocking emotions. Like the early astronauts. We have given our mind a task that requires the entire brain.

HER: We are hiding from the sensors?

HIM: Yes.

HER: We are safe?

He smiles. She does too.

Their glasses fall silent. So do they. They continue to look at each other. The son continues to shout at the top of his voice.

SON: I will report both of you. I want the screwdriver!
I want the screws! I WANT THEM! WANT THEM! WANT THEM!

We can hear him jumping up and down on the construction.

SON: WANT THEM! WANT THEM! WANT THEM! WANT THEM! WANT
 THEM! WANT THEM! WANT THEM! WANT THEM!

HIM and HER: $44 - 7 = 37$. $37 - 7 = 30$. $30 - 7 = 23$. $23 -$
 $7 = 16$. $16 - 7 = 9$. $9 - 7 = 2$. $100 - 7 = 93$. $93 -$
 $7 = 86$. $86 - 7 = \dots$

They smile at each other.

HER: Thank you!

HIM: You're welcome.

HER: So let me see, we can now do everything we have
 always wanted to do.

SON: WANT THEM! WANT THEM! WANT THEM! WANT THEM! WANT
 THEM! WANT THEM! WANT THEM!

HIM: Yes.

They look at each other and smile.

They go into their son's room, counting as they do so. His shouting stops suddenly and we can hear banging and crashing noises, the counting continues.

They return from the room like a pair of young lovers. They hold hands and in their other hands they each hold a severed robot arm with wires sticking out at the end.

They stop in front of the waste baskets.

HIM: Where does this go, packaging or mixed waste?

HER: Mixed waste.

They throw away the arms, go the kitchen sideboard and start making coffee.

HIM: Today I at long last had a dream. A dream about flying.

HER: I always dream about suffering animals.

Both their smartglasses start beeping and the red diode flashes.

HIM: 100 - 7 = 93

HER: 93 - 7 = 86

They both continue counting.

HIM and HER: 86 - 7 = 79, 79 - 7 = 72, ...

They move slowly, almost as if in a trance, absently going through the routine of making coffee.

HER: Tomorrow is Saturday.

HIM: I like Saturday mornings.

HER: Then, for once, we're not in a hurry ... thank you for sharing your secret.

HIM: Will you two ...

HER: Shhhh ... Yes. I will go and collect my friend ... Late at night, once it's dark ...

Her glasses make a brief beep. They both stop and wait. They do not beep again. They both smile.

HER: It works.
What will you do?

HIM: I dreamt of flying in my dreams, but I never landed.

They stare at each other.

HIM: I feel strange. As if everything is about to come to an end, but before that everything is going to happen.

HER: Yes, a feeling of freedom.

HIM: There is something else. All my life I have lived in fear that I would lose my mind, that I would become the victim of sudden madness. And now this weight has fallen off me. What a relief!

HER: You're right. This is true freedom. Why did we never talk like this before?

He shrugs his shoulders and she nods.

HIM: It's time we went each our own ways.

HER: Do you know where you will fly to?

HIM: No, not yet.

His glasses beep.

HIM: $100 - 7 = 93$. $93 - 7 = 86$. The thought of death still excites me. $86 - 7 = 79$. $79 - 7 = 72$. And I thought I was over it all. $72 - 7 = 65$. What a strange universe our brain is. $65 - 7 = 58$. $58 - 7 = 51$. I will fly and not tell dreams from reality. Is that what's called luck?

HER: And I will dig into the earth to find the bones. Crush them and stuff them down the throats of those torturers of poor animals.

Her glasses beep.

HER: $100 - 7 = 93$. $93 - 7 = 86$. I am looking forward to it. $86 - 7 = 79$. $79 - 7 = 72$. Really looking forward to it.

HIM: How strangely it's all ending!
And we were such an ordinary couple!
We lived such ordinary lives! An ordinary family!
A monument to ordinary life that we're now going to demolish. If you cannot create, you have to destroy.

HER: Let's go.

They are about to leave and they stop outside the door, time to say goodbye.

HIM: I wanted to tell you ... before ... when I looked at you in the kitchen ... you are beautiful.

HER: You too.

Both their smartglasses beep.

HIM and HER: $100 - 7 = 93$. $93 - 7 = 86$. $86 - 7 = 79$. $79 - 7 = 72$. $72 - 7 = 65$.

HIM: Thank you for ... $65 - 7 = 58$. $58 - 7 = 51$.

HER: I always did ... $51 - 7 = 44$. $44 - 7 = 37$. $37 - 7 = 30$. $30 - 7 = 23$. You know?

HIM: $23 - 7 = 16$. I know. $16 - 7 = 9$. $9 - 7 = 2$.

HER: I just wanted to say ... $100 - 7 = 93$. $93 - 7 = 86$.

They hold hands and look into each other's eyes.

HIM: I have so much I want to tell you. $86 - 7 = 79$. $79 - 7 = 72$.

HIM and HER: $72 - 7 = 65$. $65 - 7 = 58$. $58 - 7 = 51$. $51 - 7 = 44$. $44 - 7 = 37$. $37 - 7 = 30$. $30 - 7 = 23$. $23 - 7 = 16$. $16 - 7 = 9$. $9 - 7 = 2$. $100 - 7 = 93$. $93 - 7 = 86$. $86 - 7 = \dots$

They leave. Their countdown fades together with the sound of their footsteps.

Silence.

The sliding door to the son's room opens.

The son enters, the empty sleeves of his shirt hanging loosely at his side. He has a wound on his head with wires protruding from it.

He has an idiotic grin on his face.

He reaches the table and starts helping to set the table. With his missing hands he goes through the motion of picking up and placing the plates, stuck in the repetitive movements, continuously repeating the same sentence over and over again through his damaged speakers.

SON: Mummy, bzzz I would like bzzz!

GRADUAL BLACKOUT

THE END