

STRANGE NEWS

Words by Josse de Pauw

Music by Rolf Wallin

On stage we have the orchestra, the conductor, the young actor and the video screen.

1. NEWS

Lights fading out. On the screen: a well-known news anchorman/woman of a TV channel in the country of the concert. The man/woman (in contrast to when we see them on TV, when they're always talking to us) sits quietly at his/her desk, watching the audience in silence. Everybody sits and waits: the orchestra, the conductor, the boy, the anchorman/woman and the audience. For more than a minute we have a silent concert hall full of people. Finally the anchorman/woman speaks:

ANCHOR: Ladies and gentlemen... here is the news.

We have an outburst of music inspired by the soundtracks, tunes and jingles accompanying the 'coming-up news items' on CNN. On the screen, going with the music, are images of the horrors of war. Finally all images are pushed away by the extreme close-up of the boy's face. (During the whole concert he has a small camera fixed on his head, so we can use the image of his face directly on the wide screen). He is talking, but we cannot hear him. The music is too loud.

2. STRANGE

All of a sudden, there is a gap in the music, and we can hear what the boy is saying. As he speaks, his words appear along with his face on the giant screen:

BOY: STRANGE
IT IS STRANGE

IT IS FEELING SAFE MIDST A BATTLEFIELD
SOMEONE'S ARMS AROUND YOU

STRANGE

IT IS RIDICULOUS THE BLOOD
AND THE YELLING IN THE HEAD
STILL BEHIND THE EYES
FEELS SAFE THOUGH THE ARMS

STRANGE IT IS STRANGE

The boy tells his story:

I. THEY CAME AND CHOPPED OFF EARS

BOY: THEY CAME AND CHOPPED OFF EARS

EARS THAT DON'T LISTEN TO THEIR MASTER
HAVE TO BE CHOPPED OFF

THEN AROUND DINNER TIME THEY CAME
AND TOOK THE MEALS FROM OUR HANDS AND ATE

WHILE WE SAT STILL
AND STARED
AND SCARED
MUMBLING APOLOGIES FOR BEING THERE

FULL BULLIES, THEY WENT
AND TOOK THE GOATS
THEY TOOK THE GOATS

STRANGE

II. I KNOW I LEARNED I STUDIED.

BOY: TWO TIMES SEVEN IS FOURTEEN
AND THREE TIMES SEVEN IS TWENTY-ONE
I KNOW I LEARNED I STUDIED

THE APPLE FALLS FROM THE TREE
BECAUSE THE LAWS OF GRAVITY
I LEARNED I STUDIED

I KNOW IT WAS THE GOATS THAT PAID FOR THE SCHOOL

MOTHER SAID BE GOOD TO THE GOATS
WE MILK THEM AND WE CUT THEM THROATS
IT IS THE GOATS THAT PAY FOR THE SCHOOL
I STUDIED I LEARNED I KNOW.

THEY CHOPPED OFF EARS
STOLE STOLE THE FOOD
AND WE SAT STILL
AND STARED
AND SCARED
MUMBLED APOLOGIES FOR BEING THERE

FULL BELLIES, THEY WENT
AND TOOK THE GOATS
TOOK THE GOATS TOOK THE GOATS
THEY TOOK THE GOATS

I FOLLOWED THEM
I FOLLOWED THE GOATS

III. I SAW SO MANY THINGS NOW

BOY: TEACHER SAID ALWAYS LOOK AROUND
 AND SEE AND LEARN

I SAW SO MANY THINGS NOW
AND I KNOW NOTHING
I KNOW NOTHING NOW

ANYMORE NOW
ALTHOUGH I TRY TO GET IT BACK

STRANGE THE MAN WITH ONE EAR
THE KNOCKING ON THE DOOR IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT
THE WOMAN WITH NO HANDS
NAKED
WE MOUNTED HER THREE, FOUR TIMES
HER CHILDREN WATCHING
THE FIRE ALL AROUND
THE SMELL OF FEAR
THE BLOOD MIXING WITH THE MUD
BIRDS SINGING IN THE MORNING ABOVE THE SMOKING ASHES
PRAISING THE LORD FOR THE NEW DAY

IV. AGAIN

BOY: WHAT DO I WANT?
 TO BE A GOOD SOLDIER
 SAY IT AGAIN!
 A GOOD SOLDIER!
 AGAIN
 A GOOD SOLDIER!

WHAT DO I WANT?
TO BE A GOOD SOLDIER
SAY IT AGAIN!
A GOOD SOLDIER!
AGAIN
A GOOD SOLDIER!

V. GERALD

BOY: GERALD SAID I WANT TO GO HOME
 I WANT TO GO HOME HE SAID

I KNEW WHERE THAT WAS
I KNEW GERALD'S HOME

AND THE RUSTY RED DUSTY OPEN
WHERE WE PLAYED FOOTBALL
OR OLYMPIC GAMES
AND THE ONE TREE ON THE EDGE
WITH THE APES INSULTING US

I WANT TO GO HOME THAT'S WHAT HE SAID

WE WERE ORDERED TO KICK SLAM BEAT HIM TO DEATH
WITH STICKS MACHETES RAKES AND STONES

AS AN EXAMPLE

WE COULD DO THAT
WE COULD DO THAT GOOD

WHAT DO I WANT?
TO BE A GOOD SOLDIER
SAY IT AGAIN!
A GOOD SOLDIER!
AGAIN
A GOOD SOLDIER!

VI. GO AWAY!

BOY: STRANGE THE STARVING
THE HUNGER THAT MAKES VOMIT BUT NOTHING COMES OUT
THE THIRST NO SLEEP NO REST

THE MAJOR NEEDED LOVE AND LOVE WE GAVE
BUTT BURNING
HE SAID GOD WAS ON OUR SIDE

THE GO-AWAY-BIRD SINGING:
GO AWAY! GO AWAY!

STRANGE THE MARK WITH THE KNIFE ON MY ARM
TO RECOGNISE ME FOREVER
WHEN I FLEE FOREVER TRAITOR

GO AWAY! GO AWAY!

BEFORE THE FIGHT
THE SMOKING AND THE DRINKING
THE CUTS OF SHARP KNIVES IN OUR BREASTS
MADE US INVINCIBLE

GO AWAY! GO AWAY!

THE GLIMMER IN OUR EYES
WE WERE THE FRONT ROW
NO PERMISSION TO COVER

DADADADADADADADADADADADADA!!!!
SMG!
LMG!
RPG!
B10!
SAM!
SPG9!
DADADADADADADADADADADADADA!!!!

GO AWAY!
GO AWAY!
GO AWAY!
GO AWAY!

3. WAR

The boy looks straight into the camera for a while, nothing more to say. As the orchestral music builds to a climax, we hear the noises of the battlefield – helicopters and machine-gun fire. The boy closes his eyes. Gaps in the orchestral music increase, until suddenly at the sound of a single gunshot, the orchestral abruptly leave the stage, walking swiftly down the aisles between the audience, exiting the auditorium via the rear doors and leaving the boy alone...

4. LIFE LIKE WATER

The boy opens his eyes. He's alone. He walks away from the camera, to the middle of the stage. We hear water dripping, streaming... rain. On the screen we see whatever the camera happens to frame. The boy is in the middle of the stage, surrounded by empty chairs, unused instruments. He takes his time, then speaks:

BOY: LIFE
 LIKE WATER
 LIKE WATER LIFE

 WASHING THE FILTH AWAY
 LIKE WATER LIFE

 MUMBLING RIVER
 EASING THE PAIN

 LIFE LIKE WATER
 LIKE AN OCEAN
 AS FAR AS I CAN SEE
 LIFE AND LIFE AND
 LIFE LIKE WATER

LIKE WATER LIFE
LIKE RAIN

A CLOUDBURST
THE DOWNPOUR
I WAITED FOR SO LONG

TO MAKE FRESH
TO LET GROW
TO BE NEW
TO BE GOOD

WHAT DO I WANT?
I WANT TO BE A GOOD PERSON
SAY IT AGAIN?
A GOOD PERSON
AGAIN?
A PERSON

GOOD
A GOOD
A GOOD PERSON
A GOOD GOOD PERSON

BUT BUT LIFE BUT
LIFE LIKE WATER
LIKE HIGH TIDE
WASHING ME AWAY

CARRYING ME ON HIGH WAVES
CRUSHING ME ON STONY BEACHES
LEAVING ME LIKE WASTE

LIKE WATER LIFE
TAKING ME TO THE GUTTER
GUSHING ME DOWN THE DRAIN

LIFE LIKE WATER
STINKING WATER
TROUBLED WATER
DEAD WATER
HOLLOW SEA
THE ABYSS
THE CHASM
THE DEPTH

THE FALL
THE NEVER-ENDING FALL
DAYS AND NIGHTS
LIFE AFTER LIFE

DREAMING OF WINGS
I OPEN MY ARMS
AND FLOAT
LIKE A SMILE

THEN AWAKE
NO WINGS
NOT EVEN ONE
NO BIRD
NO ANGEL
NO CHOIRS SINGING
NO HAPPINESS AT ALL

ONLY THE WIND STRETCHING MY FACE
AS I FALL AND FALL

The boy slowly starts to move towards the camera

BOY: AND FALL
 AND FALL...

5. THE SINGING AND THE DANCING

The boy reaches the camera, and his face fills the screen. But other faces also appear. In surround sound, we hear whispering and the singing. The orchestral musicians come back on the stage, and start to tune up their instruments. On screen, the faces start to sing. The orchestral musicians gradually start to join in. The boy starts to relax and smile. He starts dancing, his eyes closed. As the music builds up, the bodies on screen also start dancing.

6. ONE NOTE SONG

The music slowly transforms into the 'One Note Song'. The boy moves back towards the camera, and watches the orchestra.

BOY: STRANGE...

The orchestra respond in unison.

ORCHESTRA: STRANGE...

BOY: STRANGE...

ORCHESTRA: STRANGE...

BOY: STRANGE...

ORCHESTRA: STRANGE...

BOY: ...TO BE BACK.
 MAY I BE BLESSED WITH A TUNEFUL VOICE.

The boy sings along with the 'One Note Song'.

7. WHAT I WAS SAYING WHEN THE MUSIC WAS TOO LOUD

When the 'One Note Song' dies out, the house lights come up. The boy leaves his position at the camera and walks in front of the stage to directly address the audience:

BOY: GOOD EVENING.
 AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CONCERT I WAS SPEAKING.
 YOU COULD SEE MY LIPS MOVING ON THE SCREEN BUT YOU
 COULDN'T HEAR ME.
 BECAUSE THE MUSIC WAS TOO LOUD.
 AND THEY DIDN'T GIVE YOU THE WORDS SO YOU COULDN'T
 READ ME.

WHAT I WAS SAYING WAS:

I WANT, FOR EXAMPLE, MOTHER, FATHER, BROTHERS, SISTERS;
WIFE AND CHILDREN AND A HOUSE.
I WANT TO WORK AND HAVE MONEY AND BUY THINGS
BEAUTIFUL THINGS TO PUT IN THE HOUSE. A DVD-PLAYER, FOR
EXAMPLE.

AND WHEN IT RAINS CROPS WILL GROW, AND I'LL GO TO
CHURCH, WHERE IS REST AND SILENCE.
NO DANGER.
AND I SIT WITH FAMILY AND BELIEVE.
AND WHEN I BELIEVE, EVERYTHING WILL BE LOVE AND
HAPPINESS BECAUSE GOD IS ON MY SIDE.
AND I WANT A LIFE MORE OR LESS LIKE YOURS.
WOULD THAT BE POSSIBLE?

AND I WANT THE GOATS BACK.

THANK YOU.

The boy smiles.

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