

STUDY || ROSA

HEART SILENCE OF POLYGON

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based on Wajdi Mouwad's *Scorched*

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PART I
CHARRED REMAINS – SUITE

THINKING ABOUT ANIMALS FROM THE BOMBED OUT ZOO

0. LOWERING THE GUARD

NOTARY

You have to plunge,
to dive,
to jump in.
And reconstruct the story
in shreds...

00. THE ARCHITECTURE OF FALL

01. FROM ONE LITTER

THOUGHT

A stone, flames, knives and a rope.
That's how they murdered the dream
of old men, women and children sleeping...
...in the great cradle of the night.

Memory! Memory!

MEMORY

What are you going to do?

THOUGHT

The same as our ancestors did – I'll try to read in the flight of birds the presages of things to come.

MEMORY

And where are you going?

THOUGHT

I'll enter every house!

MEMORY

And you are going to fire a bullet into every head?

THOUGHT

“An eye for an eye,” “a tooth for a tooth,” that’s what they say!

MEMORY

Think! Think!

It can’t bring anyone back to life.

You’re a victim and you want to become a murderer,
and then... a victim again.

You know how to read and write, speak and count...!

The pain is a sum too monstrous to be calculated.

You can’t add to the accumulation of pain.

THOUGHT

What can we do? Just fold our arms and wait?

Speak? Think?

Calculate?

We have been cleaned out and skinned.

MEMORY

Do you think that you’re going to teach the torturer something
by spilling the blood of his son and daughter?

02. SPRINKLE ME WITH DEW

MERIAM

When a thought finds solace

And a wound heals, another wound festers in memory.

Let me drink from her ruins.

And tell the story on my behalf,
before tears dry.

03. AROUND THE KNIFE

MERIAM

What kind of world is this...

where animals bring more hope than men?

What kind of world is this...

where objects bring more hope than men?

MEMORY

You see these shoes?
We took them off the feet of the corpses last night.
We killed all men who were wearing them,
looking them into their eyes.
The kept saying:
“We’re from the same country,
the same blood,
from the south,
from the north.”
And we smashed their skulls
and stripped off their shoes.

MERIAM
Nice... Beautiful...
Interesting... Extraordinary...
That’s like spitting in the victims’ faces.

MEMORY
In the beginning, my hand shook...

THOUGHT
It’s like everything else.
The first time, you hesitate.
You don’t know how tough a skull can be.
You don’t know how hard you have to hit.
You don’t know where to stab your knife.

MEMORY
The worst isn’t stabbing the knife, it’s pulling it out...

THOUGHT
Because all the muscles contract and hold on to the knife.

MEMORY
The muscles know that’s where life is.
That life is around the knife.

04. GETTING TO THE BOTTOM OF IT

THOUGHT
From anger to harm,
from sadness to grief,
from rape to HATRED...

and back to... the beginning of time...

Two days ago, the militia hung
three young refugees
who strayed outside the camps.

Why did the militia hang the three teenagers?

MERIAM

Because two refugees from the camp had raped and killed a girl from the village.

THOUGHT

Why did they rape the girl?

MERIAM

Because the militia had stoned the family of refugees.

THOUGHT

Why did the militia stone them?

MERIAM

Because the refugees had set fire to a house near the hill.

THOUGHT

Why did the refugees set fire to the house?

MERIAM

To take revenge on the militia who had destroyed a well they had drilled.

THOUGHT

Why did the militia destroy the well?

MERIAM

Because the refugees had burned the crop near the river where the wolves run.

THOUGHT

Why did they burn the crop?...

MERIAM

There must be a reason...

MEMORY

There must be a reason...

THOUGHT

There must be a reason...
That's as far as my memory goes,
But the story can go on forever...

05. MOTHER-EXECUTION

On fire...
Three days ago everything was on fire,
everything...
everything went up in flames.
One militiaman prepared the execution of three brothers.
He lined them up in front of the wall.
Their legs were shaking.
Others pulled their mother by the hair,
stood her in front of her sons
and the militiaman shouted:
“Choose!
choose, choose which one you want to save.
Choose!
Choose or I'll shoot all three of them!
I'm going to count to three,
and I'm going to kill all three of them!
Choose!”
And she...
unable to speak,
unable to think,
shook her head,
and looked from one son to the next!
With her heavy breasts
and body ravaged by having carried all three of them.
She looked at the militiaman and said,
as a last hope,
“How dare you,
look at me,
I could be your mother!”
And then he hit her.
“Don't insult my mother!
Choose!”
Then she said a name
and collapsed.
And the militiaman shot the two youngest
and left her first born alive.

And the eldest son was trembling!
And he just left him.
And walked away.
And the two bodies fell.
And the mother stood up
and in the middle of the town in flames she began to wail
that she had killed her children.

You are a leaf...
You are a leaf...
You are a leaf... of a lemon tree.
You were born to walk in bright light.

MEMORY
You were born to look into the sun.

MERIAM
You were born to listen to the rain.

PART II

AL-ATLAL – RUINS

REMEMBERING MERIAM IBRAHIM'S STORY...

Gently
Console every shred.
Gently
Cure every moment.
Gently
Rock every image.

I. THE TAR PIT

1. THE OPENING OF THE LAST WILL

NOTARY'S VOICE
Come in, come in,
come in!!
Don't stand in the hallway.
I understand,
well, yes, I understand you might not want to come in.

I wouldn't come in.
The testament is something alien,
something necessary.
It's a necessary evil...

For sure...
for sure, I would've preferred to meet you under other circumstances...
But it's better than a tar pit...!
That's what my father said just before he died.
"Death is better than a tar pit"...

THE TWIN BROTHER
Death doesn't speak.
It breaks all promises.
It comes when it pleases.

THE TWIN SISTER
She'd say: the twins.
The twin sister.
The twin brother.

THE TWIN BROTHER
She never said anything to anyone.
I mean long before she stopped saying anything at all...

THE TWIN SISTER
When she died, it was raining.

THE TWIN BROTHER
In her country it never rains...

MERIAM
All what I have is to be divided equally between
the twins, the offspring of my flesh.

I leave the green coat with the number 72 on the back to you.
And to you – the red notebook.

Bury me naked,
Bury me without a coffin,
No clothing, no covering,
No prayer,
Face to the ground.
Place me at the bottom of a hole,

Face first, against the world.
As a farewell,
You will each throw
A pail of cold water
On my body.
Then you will fill the hole with earth and seal my grave.

Let no stone be placed on my grave.
Nor my name engraved anywhere.
No epitaph for those who don't keep promises.
And the promise was not kept.
No epitaph for those who keep the silence.
And silence was kept.
No stone,
No name on the stone,
No epitaph for an absent name on an absent stone.
No name.

Childhood is a knife stuck in the throat.
It can't be easily removed.
Childhood can't be easily cut.
The knife can't be easily dulled.

Notary will give you an envelope.
This envelope is not for you.
It is for your father.
Your and your brother's.
Find him and give him this envelope.

Notary will give you an envelope.
This envelope is not for you.
It is for your brother.
Your and your sister's.
Find him and give him this envelope.

Once these envelopes have been delivered,
You will be given a letter.
The silence will be broken
And a stone can be placed on my grave.
And my name engraved on the stone in the sun.

2. INTRODUCTION TO THE GRAPH THEORY

THE TWIN BROTHER

She had to piss us off right to the very end!
That witch! That old slut! Fucking cunt!
Fucking whore! Dirty slut!
That old slag! Nasty bitch!
For ages now, we've been thinking, the bitch is going to croak,
she'll stop fucking up our lives, the old pain in the ass!
And then, bingo!
She finally croaks!
But no..., surprise...
It's not over yet!
We have never expected this!
She did her homework and calculated everything!
You bet we're going to bury her face down!
You bet!
We'll spit on her!
At least I'm going to spit!

THE TWIN SISTER

There's no way of knowing today how many of you will pass the tests ahead of us.
Mathematics as you have known them so far were all about finding strict and definitive answers to strict and definitively stated problems.
The mathematics you will encounter are totally different since we will be dealing with insoluble problems that always lead to other problems, every bit as insoluble.

People around you will insist
that what you are wrestling with is useless.
Your manner of speaking will change
and, even more profoundly, so will your manner of remaining... silent.
That is exactly what people will find the hardest to forgive.
People will criticize you for squandering your intelligence on absurd theoretical exercises.
You won't be able to argue in your defense,
since your arguments themselves will be of an absolutely exhausting theoretical complexity.

Welcome to pure mathematics, in other words, to the world of solitude!!

THE TWIN BROTHER

I'm not going to cry.
I swear I'm not going to cry!
She's dead!
I don't owe her a thing.
Not a single tear,

nothing!
People can say what they want!
That I didn't cry over my mother's death!
I'll say she wasn't my mother!
I'm not going to start pretending!
Start crying!
When did she ever cry over me?
In her heart she didn't have a heart but a stone.

THE TWIN SISTER

Let's take a simple polygon with five sides: A, B, C, D and E.
Let's call this polygon 'P.'
Now let's imagine that this polygon represents the floor plan of the house
where a family lives.
And one member of the family is posted in each corner of the house.
Let's replace for a moment,
I repeat – for a moment
– A, B, C, D and E by the mother, the father, the son, the daughter, and another son
who live together in Polygon P.
Now let's ask ourselves who, from his or her position, sees whom.
The mother sees the father, the son, the daughter and another son.
The father sees the mother.
The son sees the sister and the mother.
The other son sees the mother.
And the sister sees the mother and the brother.

We call this application the theoretical application of the family living in Polygon P.

Now, let's remove the walls of the house
and draw lines between the members of the family who can see each other.
The drawing this creates is called the visibility graph of Polygon P.
How can we draw the visibility graph
and provide the shape of the corresponding polygon?
What is the shape of the house,
where the members of the family live?
Try to draw this polygon...
You will never succeed.
All graph theory is based on this problem,
which remains for the time being impossible to solve.
And it's this impossibility that is beautiful.

THE TWIN BROTHER

Her last will!
Find your father and brother!

Why didn't she find them herself if it was so fucking urgent!?
Why didn't she worry more about us?!
Did she have to have another son?!
Why in her last will she doesn't use the word "my children"?!
The word "son", the word "daughter"!
Only "the offspring of my flesh",
like we were
a pile of shit, spit, and vomit
she wanted to get rid of.

3. A PERIPHERAL VISION DISORDER

THE TWIN SISTER

You know why you lost your last fight?
You know why you lost the one before that...?
And the one before...?

THE TWIN BROTHER

And the one before and... before as well...

THE TWIN SISTER

You're never going to qualify if this keeps up.
Wrap up your hands.
You're not looking!
You're blind!
You don't see the footwork of your opponent.
You don't see his guard...
That's what is called a peripheral vision disorder.
You're the strongest!
No pity...

THE TWIN BROTHER

No pity... for the opponent?!

THE TWIN SISTER

If you win, you become a professional.

THE TWIN BROTHER

How can you take her seriously?
For 10 years, she spent day after day at the courthouse,
attending the trials of all sorts of perverts,
sickos and murderers,
then,

from one day to the next,
she shuts up.
Never says another word!
And now she invents a husband still alive
and another son who never existed...
Fuck!!

THE TWIN SISTER

The day and the hour of our birth she spoke again!
It was a present she was offering us.
She said:
“Now that we’re together, everything feels better.”
Now that we’re together...

In mathematics,
1 plus 1 doesn’t equal 1.9 or 2.2.
It equals 2.
Whether you believe it or not, it equals 2.
I thought I knew my place...
I thought that from the position I hold I can see only my mother and my brother.
Today, I found out that I can see also my father;
moreover I found out that there is another vertex of this polygon,
another brother.
Where do I stand in the polygon then?

II. HAMARTIA

4. THE BELLY

BELOVED-FATHER

I brought you a present, Meriam.
The same one you saw in the travelling theatre.
How hard you laughed!
I went to their campsite,
I almost got eaten alive by the lion,
trampled on by the elephant,
I had to negotiate with the tigers,
and I put three snakes to sleep.
Then I walked into the clown’s tent.
The nose was on the table,
I grabbed it
and run!

MERIAM

Listen.

Don't say a word.

No.

Don't speak.

If you say one more word,
you can kill me.

I won't speak.

My belly is full of you.

And there is no more words.

Just the wind.

They'll kill us.

You first...

5. ARE YOU CRYING?

MOTHER

This child has nothing to do with you.

MERIAM

It's in my belly.

MOTHER

Forget your belly!

This child has nothing to do with you.

Nothing to do with your family,

nothing to do with your mother,

nothing to do with your life.

MERIAM

I put my hand here and I can see his face.

MOTHER

It doesn't matter what you see!

This child has nothing to do with you.

It doesn't exist.

It isn't there.

MERIAM

And when it arrives?

MOTHER

It still won't exist.

Dry your tears.

MERIAM

You're the one who's crying.

MOTHER

You've come back
with your spoiled belly
and you stand here before me
to tell me with your child's body:
"I am in love and I am carrying all my love in my belly."
This child doesn't exist.
You're going to forget it.

MERIAM

A person can't forget her belly!

MOTHER

A person can forget.

MERIAM

I won't forget!

MOTHER

Then you will have to choose!
Keep this child
And this instant
you will leave your homeland in the north
leave this house,
leave your family
and leave me...

MERIAM

Mother...

MOTHER

...Or stay and kneel down, Meriam.
Kneel down!
Kneel down!!

MERIAM

Mother!

MOTHER

You will stay in this house.
And the baby will be taken by whoever wants it...

6. TOGETHER

BELOVED-FATHER

Childhood is a knife stuck in the throat...
By... the brothers from the north.
Now I'll always have the taste of your blood in my mouth.
When you give birth to this child, tell him:
"No matter what happens, I will always love you."

MERIAM

No matter what happens, I will always love you.

7. TO READ, TO WRITE, TO SPEAK, TO COUNT

GRANDMOTHER

As winter ends, I hear death's footsteps in the rushing water of the streams.
The seasons go by.
Meriam no longer speaks,
blames herself and wanders in silence.
Wanders.

There are things we want to tell in the moment of death
to the people we have loved,
who have loved us...
To tell them...
one last time...
to prepare them for happiness!

Don't give up.
Don't say "yes."
Say "no."
Your love is gone.
Your child is gone.
Don't accept it.
Never accept it.
Learn to read.
Learn to write.
Learn to count.
It's your only hope if you don't want to turn out like us.

Promise me you will...
Promise me you will!
Promise!!

MERIAM
I promise.

GRANDMOTHER
In three days, they will bury me.
They'll put me in the ground, facing the sky,
and everyone will throw a pail of water on me,
but they won't write anything on the stone
because no one knows how to write.
When you know how to write,
come back and engrave my name on the stone,
because I have kept my promise.
We... the women in our family
have been caught in the web of anger for ages.

And your legacy to your daughter will be anger too.
We have to break the thread.
Learn to refuse.
Break the silence.
Break the silence...

III. THE GREEN COAT

8. THE TWINS

THE TWIN BROTHER
The university is looking for you.
Your friends are looking for you.
Your students are looking for you.
And I'm looking for you...

THE TWIN SISTER
Why have you come to me?

THE TWIN BROTHER
Because everyone thinks you're dead!

THE TWIN SISTER
I'm fine.

You can leave.

THE TWIN BROTHER

You're starting to act like her.

THE TWIN SISTER

How I act is my own business.

THE TWIN BROTHER

No!

It's my business, too.

I'm all you have left,

and you're all I have left.

And you've stopped talking.

Like her.

One day she comes home

and she locks herself in her room.

She sits there.

One day.

Two.

Three.

Doesn't eat.

Or drink.

She disappears.

Once.

Twice.

Three times.

Comes back.

Refuses to talk.

She locks herself in.

You lock yourself in.

You refuse to talk.

THE TWIN SISTER

Listen.

Listen for a bit.

You can hear her breathing.

THE TWIN BROTHER

You're listening to silence...!?

THE TWIN SISTER

It's her silence.

THE TWIN BROTHER

Throw these recordings away.
Go back to the university.
Give your courses and finish your Ph.D.

THE TWIN SISTER

I don't give a damn about my Ph.D.! Fuck!
There's something in my mother's silence
that I want to understand.
Leave me alone.
I'm your sister, not your mother.
You're my brother, not my father.

THE TWIN BROTHER

It's all the same thing...

THE TWIN SISTER

1 plus 1 equals 2...

9. PHOTOGRAPH

THE TWIN SISTER

Speak!
Why won't you say something to me?
Why don't you say something to me?
Where to begin...?

At the time she was following
some preliminary hearings at the international tribunal,
which were related to the war in the country where she was born.
I read and reread the minutes a hundred times,
trying to understand.
There's no logic.
She stopped talking on the day of our birthday.
She came home and refused to talk.
Period.

There is only this little photograph...

I have to blow it up.
Study it.
Look for little details.
That's where I have to begin.

I can see her.
Sitting there.
In silence.
No wild look in her eyes.
No lost look.
Lucid and piercing.
What are you looking at, mama,
what are you looking at?

10. BUS PHOBIA

MERIAM

I was in the bus, I was with them!
When they doused us with gas, I screamed:
“I’m not from the camp, I’m not one of the refugees from the south,
I’m one of you,
I’m looking for my child whom you took away from me!”
So they let me off the bus,
And then,
then they opened fire,
and in a flash, the bus went up in flames,
it went up in flames with everyone inside,
the old people, the children, the women, everyone!
One woman tried to escape through a window,
But the soldiers shot her,
And she died there,
Straddling the window
with her child in her arms.
Her skin melted,
her child’s skin melted
everything melted!

11. TO THE VERY HEART OF THE POLYGON

THE TWIN SISTER

It’s my mother’s country.
Summertime.
There’s something written on the burnt-out bus in the background.
You see that,
just above her hand...
The butt of a gun.
Maybe she was working as a guard in the prison...

MERIAM

What are you afraid of?

THE TWIN SISTER

What am I afraid of?

Of finding out...

THE TWIN SISTER	THE TWIN BROTHER
I'm calling to you... I'm at the airport. I'm calling to tell you that I'm going there. I'm not doing it for her, I'm doing it for myself. And for you. For the future. But first we have to find mama, her past. I have to hang up. I'm going to hang up and tumble headfirst into the world, far...	I don't get it. I don't get what you're up to. There is nothing left... no father, no brother, just you and me. What are you going to do? Run around everywhere shouting: "Papa, papa, where are you? I'm your daughter." This is no mathematical problem, for chissakes! You won't find the solution. There is no solution. There is no...

THE TWIN SISTER

...far from the fucking strict geometry that has defined my life.

I've learned to write and count, to read and...

MERIAM

...refuse.

THE TWIN SISTER

...speak.

THE TWIN SISTER

I've learned to calculate...

Where are you leading me, mama?

Where are you leading me?

MERIAM

To the very heart of the polygon,
to the very heart...

IV. THE SEARCH

12. HOMELAND

THE TWIN SISTER

They told me that you know all the tales of the village.

MIDWIFE

The true and the false, too...

THE TWIN SISTER

Do you remember Meriam?

She was born and grew up here.

MIDWIFE

Meriam left.

But that's a legend.

THE TWIN SISTER

And what does a legend say?

MIDWIFE

It says that one night they separated Meriam and her beloved.

THE TWIN SISTER

Who was he?

MIDWIFE

It's a legend!

They say if you linger too long in the woods, near the rock under the wolf hill, you'll hear their laughter.

In the cemetery, the stone still stands
where, according to the legend,
Meriam engraved her grandmother's name.
Letter by letter.

THE TWIN SISTER

Where is the nearest prison?

MIDWIFE

In hell.

THE TWIN SISTER

And more specifically?

MIDWIFE

Follow this road to the south.

13. TWO BULLETS

MERIAM

I will grab the grenades and head to those stupid men
and blow myself up with joy.

You've promised to break this thread.

It's enough that you see your life in the wrinkles
of the men who are destroying our lives...

Really, is this enough to tear them to shreds, right to the marrow of their souls?

No!

I'm going to strike.

But only a single spot.

I won't touch a child,

a woman

or an old man,

except for one man who gave the order.

I'll fire two shots at his head.

Two twin bullets.

Not one, not three.

Two.

14. THE PRISON

GUIDE

To revive the tourist trade

this prison was turned into a museum after a civil war.

This is the most famous cell – number 7.

People make pilgrimages here.

It was the cell of the woman who sings.

She was a prisoner here for 5 years.

When the others were being tortured, she'd sing.

THE TWIN SISTER

Was the woman who sings named Meriam?

GUIDE

No one knew her name.

They just had serial numbers.

The woman who sings was number 72.

It's a famous number around here.

THE TWIN SISTER

72?!

Do you know anyone who worked here?

GUIDE

Go to the janitor at the school.

15. THE WOMAN WHO SINGS

THE TWIN SISTER

Can you recognise this? There's number 72 at the back.

THE JANITOR

The woman who sings...

I was one of the few people to see her face.

Cell number 7.

The one who assassinated the paramilitary leader with two bullets.

They sent her here.

All her friends were captured and killed.

Only the woman who sings survived.

The governor handled her.

The nights when he raped her, we couldn't tell their voices apart.

THE TWIN SISTER

She was raped!

THE JANITOR

It was very common around here.

She got pregnant...

The night she gave birth,

the whole prison fell silent.

She gave birth all alone,

crouching in a corner of her cell.

We could hear her screams

which were like a curse on us all.

When it was over,

I entered the cell.

Everything was dark.

She had put the child in a pail

and covered it with a towel.

I was the one who always took the babies to the river.

It was winter.

I took the pail, I didn't dare look in it, and I went out.

The night was clear and cold.

Pitch black.
 No moon.
 The river was frozen.
 I went to the ditch and I left the pail there.
 But I could hear the child crying and the song of the woman who sings.
 Their voices were like banks of snow in my soul.
 So I went back and took the pail to the village.
 I told the woman who gave me some water:
 “This is the child of the woman who sings.”

THE TWIN SISTER

Why didn't you tell us?
 We would have defended you.
 Why didn't you ever tell us?!
 Why did I never hear you sing, mama?

16. THE BROTHER AND THE SISTER

THE TWIN SISTER	THE TWIN BROTHER
<p>I don't give a damn. I don't give a damn about your boxing match! Shut up! She was in jail! She was tortured! She was raped! Do you hear me!? Raped! Do you hear what I'm saying?! Our brother is the child she had in jail.</p> <p>No! Fuck, I'm halfway round the world, in the middle of nowhere, there's a sea and two oceans between us, so shut up and listen!</p>	<p>No... no... I'm not interested in that! My boxing match! That's all...</p> <p>I'm not interested in knowing all that! I'm not interested!</p> <p>I know who I am today, and that's enough for me!</p> <p>Now, you listen to me! Come home!</p> <p>Come home, fuck, right away!</p> <p>Hello! Hello...! Fuck...! I have only you, and you have only me. We have to forget. Call me back, fuck, call me back!</p>

THE TWIN SISTER

No, I'm not going to call you back.
You're going to see the notary
and ask him for the red notebook
and you're going to see what's in it.
Period!

Intermède: the Burial

NOTARY'S VOICE

Hello... Yes...

...Yes, I called you;

I've been trying to reach you for three hours...

...What's going on? Nothing! Nothing!

We were supposed to have three pails of water at the graveside, and there is not even one...

...Yes, I'm the one who called three times for the pails of water...

...What do you mean, "What's the problem, there's no problem"?

There is a big problem...

...I told you we requested three pails of water and they're not here...

...We're in the cemetery, where do you think we are! How thick can you get?...

...Three pails of water...

...Of course it was understood,

I came myself,

I notified everyone: a special burial;

it didn't seem complicated,

I even asked the custodian:

"Do you want us to bring our own pails of water?"

He said:

„Of course not.

We'll prepare them for you.

You've got enough on your mind already!"

So I said fine.

But here we are, in the cemetery

and there are no pails of water, and now we've got a lot more on our minds...

17. PRESSED AGAINST EACH OTHER

THE TWIN SISTER

A shepherd directed me to you.

A WOMAN

Who sent you to the shepherd?

THE TWIN SISTER

The janitor at the school.

A WOMAN

And who sent you to the janitor?

THE TWIN SISTER

The guide in the prison.

A WOMAN

Why did you go to see her?

THE TWIN SISTER

A refugee from the south directed me there.

A WOMAN

And who sent you to see the refugee?

THE TWIN SISTER

At this rate, we'll go back to the day of my birth...

A WOMAN

And then we'll find a beautiful love story.

Time is a strange beast...

So?

THE TWIN SISTER

The refugee from the south lives in the village where my mother was born.

A WOMAN

And what was your mother's name?

THE TWIN SISTER

Meriam.

A WOMAN

Who do you want me to direct you to?

THE TWIN SISTER

To the child that the janitor gave you one day, on behalf of my mother.

A WOMAN

I don't know your mother.

THE TWIN SISTER

You don't know Meriam?

A WOMAN

The name doesn't mean anything to me.

THE TWIN SISTER

What about the woman who sings?

A WOMAN

Why are you talking about the woman who sings?

Do you know her?

Has she come back?

THE TWIN SISTER

The woman who sings is dead.

Meriam is the woman who sings.

Her name is Meriam.

And she is my mother.

A WOMAN

I cared for... the twins as if they were my own.

THE TWIN SISTER

No! No!

That's not true!

That can't be us!

We were born in hospital.

We have our birth certificates!

And we were born in the summer, not in the winter,

And the child born in the prison was born in the winter
because the river was frozen.

The janitor told me that's why she couldn't throw the pail into the frozen water!

A WOMAN

She is mistaken.

THE TWIN SISTER

No! She isn't!

She saw her every day!

She took the child, she took the pail, the child was in the pail,

and there was only one child, not two, not two!

A WOMAN

She didn't look carefully.

THE TWIN SISTER

My father is dead
and he loved my mother
and my mother loved him.

A WOMAN

Is that what she told you?
Why not,
children need bedtime stories
to help them fall asleep.

Now you listen to me:
I lift up the cloth covering the pail,
and what do I see,
two babies,
two newborn babies,
red with anger,
pressed against each other,
clinging to each other
with all the fervor of the beginning of their lives.

I warned you.
The question-and-answer game
can easily lead back to the birth of things...

V. THE RED NOTEBOOK

18. THE TESTIMONY

MERIAM

There are ghosts speaking to you through me.
I wish to make my testimony standing,
my eyes wide open,
because I was often forced to keep them closed.
I will make my testimony facing my torturer.
I speak to you
so you know that I recognize you,
that I recognize your smile.

Many of your men feared you,
although they were nightmares, too.
How can a nightmare fear a nightmare?
The men who come after us might be able to solve this enigma.
I recognize you, but you may not recognize me,
Despite my conviction that you can place me perfectly...

MERIAM and THE TWIN BROTHER

...since your job as a torturer required an excellent memory
for family names and given names,
for dates, and places and events.
Nevertheless, let me remind you of my face
because my face was what you cared least about.
You remember much more clearly my skin,
my smell,
my body.
Perhaps my name will mean nothing to you,
because all the women were nothing
but whores with different numbers to you.
My name will mean nothing to you,
perhaps my whore number will mean nothing,
but there's one thing you haven't forgotten.
The woman who sings.
Now do you remember?

You hanged me by the feet,
doused me with water,
applied electric shocks.
You hammered shards under my fingernails
and aimed a loaded gun against my temple.
You spit in my face and kicked me.
You penetrated me,
once,
twice, three times.
So often that time was shattered.
Your ghastly tortures in my belly
and I was left alone.
You insisted that I be alone to give birth.
Two children, twins.
You made it impossible for me to love the children.
Because of you, I struggled to raise them in grief and in silence.

MERIAM

How could I tell them about the bitter truth

which like a green fruit could never ripen?
I promise you that one day
they will come and stand before you,
bearing their own share of victories and defeats,
and you will be alone with them,
just as I was,
and like me, you will lose all the sense of being alive.

THE TWIN BROTHER

A rock would feel more alive than you.
And they will both know who you are.
By the time they will have learned how to read,
write and count.
They will have learnt to think and... to speak...

MERIAM

They will have learnt to refuse.

THE TWIN BROTHER

To remain silent about your acts
would make me accomplice to your crimes.

19. AN AMATEUR

THE TWIN BROTHER

A brother... What's the point in searching for him?

MERIAM

Do it for your sister. She can't go on living if she doesn't know.

THE TWIN BROTHER

But I'll never be able to find him!

THE TWIN SISTER

Of course you'll! You're a boxer!

THE TWIN BROTHER

An amateur. I'm an amateur. I've never fought a professional fight!

Where are you taking me, mama?

Where are you taking me?

MERIAM

I need your fists to break the silence.
Now you must discover your brother's name...

Intermède: the Burial – cont.

NOTARY'S VOICE

...That's right!
This is a burial! Not a bowling party!
Besides we're not difficult:
no coffin,
no tombstone,
nothing, the bare minimum!
A simple, poor burial.
We're only asking for three miserable pails of water,
and you can't meet the challenge...
...Yes, I'm sure...
...What can I say?...
KEEP SEARCHING!!!

20. TELL ME WHO I AM

NIHAD

– No! No! I don't want to die! I don't want to die! I don't want to die!
– “I don't want to die”!, “I don't want to die”!
 That's the dumbest sentence I know!
– Please, let me go!
 I'm not from around here.
 I'm a photographer.
 A war photographer.
– Did you take my picture...?
– Yes... I wanted a shot of a sniper...
 But I can give you the film...
– I'm a photographer, too.
 A “war” photographer.
 My name is Nihad.
 Look.
 I took these.
– Very nice.
– No! It's not nice.
 People usually think it's shots of people sleeping.
 But no.
 They're dead.

- And I'm the one who killed them...
- I believe you.
 - What are you doing?!
 - Don't kill me!
 - I could be your father,
 - I'm the same age as your mother.
 - Shut the fuck up!!!

 - Welcome, welcome, welcome...
 - Kirk, I very happy to be here at *Star TV Show*...
 - Thank you to you, Nihad.
 - So Nihad, what is your next song?
 - My next song will be a love song.
 - A love song!
 - Yes, a love song, Kirk.
 - It's new on you career, Nihad.
 - You know, I wrote this song when it was war.
 - War on my country.
 - Yeah, one day a woman that I love die. Yeah.
 - Shooting by a sniper.
 - I feel a big crash in my heart.
 - My heart collapse.
 - Yes, I cry.
 - And I wrote this song.
 - Thank you, Nihad.
 - No problem, Kirk.
 - One, two, three...

And deep, when all the world's asleep,
The questions run so deep
For such a simple man.
Won't you please, please tell me what we've learned
I know it sounds absurd
But please tell me who I am.
Who I am...
Who I am...

TELL ME WHO I AM...?

21. SNIPER'S PRINCIPLES

NIHAD

- Welcome, welcome, welcome...

- again to the *Star TV Show*!
- You know, Kirk, sniper job is a fantastic job.
 - Excellent, Nihad, can you tell something more about this?
 - Yeah...! It is an artistic job.
 Because a good sniper don't shoot just any way,
 no, no, NO!
 I have a lot of principles!
 First: when you shoot, you have to kill,
 immediate,
 for not make suffering the person.
 Sure!
 Second: you shoot all persons!
 It's equal with everybody!
 But for me, Kirk, my gun is like my life.
 Every bullet I put in the gun,
 is like a poem.
 And I shoot a poem to the people
 and it is the precision of my poem that kill people
 and this is why my photos is so fantastic.
 - And tell me, Nihad, you shoot everybody.
 - No, Kirk, not everybody...
 - I imagine you don't kill children.
 - Yes, yes, I kill children.
 No problem.
 It's like pigeon, you know.
 - So?
 - I don't shoot a woman like Angelina Jolie.
 Angelina Jolie is a strong actress.
 I like her very much
 and I don't kill Angelina Jolie.
 So when I see a woman like her, I just don't shoot her...
 - You don't shoot Angelina Jolie.
 - No, Kirk, sure not!
 - Thank you, Nihad,
 - You are welcome, Kirk.

22. ARTIST'S REPUTATION

THE TWIN BROTHER

I look for the son of the woman who sings whom she had before me.
 At the orphanage, they said in those days the militiamen kidnapped the kids
 to blow them up in the camps.
 I went to a militiaman from the same camp,

and he told me he can't remember much,
except for one guy
who had no mother, no father,
and who took off one day.
His name was Nihad...

MERIAM

A sniper.
He collected photographs.
And had real reputation as an artist.
He could be heard singing.
A killing machine.
One day, they caught him.
He had killed 7 of their marksmen.
He shot them in the eye.
They didn't kill him.
They kept him and trained him.
They gave him work in a prison.
He changed his name.
He searched for his mother, but he didn't recognize her.
She searched for her son, but she didn't recognize him.
He didn't kill her, because she sang and he liked her voice.

23. ONE

THE TWIN BROTHER

You always told me that $1 + 1 = 2$. Is that true?

THE TWIN SISTER

Yes... It's true...

THE TWIN BROTHER

You didn't lie to me?

THE TWIN SISTER

Of course not! $1 + 1 = 2$...

THE TWIN BROTHER

It can never be 1?!

THE TWIN SISTER

What did you find...?!

THE TWIN BROTHER

Can 1 plus 1 equal 1?

THE TWIN SISTER

Yes...

THE TWIN BROTHER

How?!

Explain it me!

How 1 plus 1 can equal 1?

You always said I didn't understand anything. So, now's the time!

THE TWIN SISTER

Fine.

There's a strange hypothesis in math.

A hypothesis that's never been proven.

You can give me a figure.

If it's an even number, you divide it by 2.

If it's uneven, you multiply it by 3 and add 1.

You do the same thing with the figure you get.

No matter what number you start with, you'll always end up with 1.

Give me a figure.

THE TWIN BROTHER

7.

THE TWIN SISTER

7 is...

THE TWIN BROTHER

...uneven.

THE TWIN SISTER

You multiply it by 3 and add 1.

THE TWIN BROTHER

22.

THE TWIN SISTER

22 is even, you divide by 2.

THE TWIN BROTHER

11.

THE TWIN SISTER

11 is uneven, you multiply by 3, you add 1.

THE TWIN BROTHER

34.

THE TWIN SISTER

34 is even. You divide by 2, 17.

17 is uneven, you multiply by 3 you add 1, 52.

52 is even.

You divide by 2, 26.

26 is even, you divide by 2, 13.

13 is uneven. You multiply by 3 and add 1, 40.

40 is even.

You divide by 2, 20.

20 is even, you divide by 2, 10.

10 is even, you divide by 2, 5.

5 is uneven, you multiply by 3 and add 1, 16.

16, you divide by 2, 8.

8, you divide by 2, 4.

4 by 2, 2.

2 by 2, 1. No!!! No!!! No!!!

Intermède: the Burial – final

NOTARY'S VOICE

No? ...Yes?...

...No?...

...What's happening?...

...Ah, the pails were prepared and placed in front of another grave...

Your efficiency is overwhelming!

24. SILENCE IS SEXY

NIHAD

I don't contest anything that has been said at my trial over this summer.

The people who claimed I tortured them – I did torture them.

And the people I am accused of having killed – I did kill them.

In fact I would like to thank them all,

because they made it possible for me to take some very beautiful photographs.

The men I hit, and the women I raped, their faces where always more moving

after the blow and after the rape.
This trial has been such a bore!
No beat, no sense of showbiz.
No wow!!!
So I'm going to sing you a song.
Because dignity has to be preserved.
I'm not the one who said that,
it was a woman, the one everyone called the woman who signs.

Silence is sexy.
Silence is sexy.
So sexy...
So sexy...
Just your silence is not sexy at all.
Just your silence is not sexy at all.
Your silence is not sexy at all.

People always said it was found in a pail
where I was put after I was born.
And they say it is a sign of my origins,
of my dignity.
According to the story, it was given to me by my mother.
Show is my dignity,
my source.
Right from the very beginning.

25: Breaking the silence

MERIAM
I am trembling as I write to you.
I would like to drill these words into your ruthless heart.
My letter is to tell you:
Look, your daughter and your son are facing you.
What will you say to them?
Will you sing them a song?
They know who you are.
The daughter and the son of the torturer,
children born of horror.
Look at them.
This letter was delivered by your daughter.
Through her, I want to tell you that soon you will stop talking.
I know this.
Silence awaits everyone in the face of truth.

Cell number 7.
Whore number 72.
The woman who sings.

I looked for you everywhere.
I searched for you in the rain.
I searched for you in the sun.
In the south,
In the north.
I searched for you while digging in the earth
to bury my friends.
I searched for you while looking at the sky.
I search for you amidst a flock of birds.

For an instant, you have become happiness.
For ages, you became horror.
Horror and happiness.
The silence in my throat.
Let me tell you.
You stood up.
And you took out that clown nose.
And my memory exploded.
Don't tremble.
Don't freeze.
These are ancient words that come from my deepest memories.
Words I often whispered to you in my cell.
I told you about your father.
About the promise he made the day of your birth:
"No matter what happens, I will always love you."
No matter what happens, I will always love you.
I hated you with all my being.
But where there is love,
there can be no hatred.
And to preserve love,
I chose not to speak.

You are facing your sister and your brother.
Listen, I am writing this letter in the rainy evening air.
This letter will tell you that the woman who sings
was your mother.
Perhaps you will also stop talking.
So be humble
and patient.
Beyond silence

there is the happiness of being together.
Nothing is more beautiful than being together.
Your mother.

THE TWIN BROTHER

It's going to rain.

THE TWIN SISTER

In her country it never rains.

THE TWIN BROTHER

My son,
Are you crying?
If you are crying, don't dry your tears,
Because I don't dry mine.
Childhood is a knife stuck in the throat
And you managed to remove it.

THE TWIN SISTER

My daughter,
Are you smiling?
If you are smiling, don't stifle your laughter
Because I don't stifle mine.
We, the women in our family
are trapped in anger.
We have to break the thread.

NOTARY'S VOICE

Go out, go out!
I understand...
You don't want to go out...
If I were you, I'd also stay...
It's a necessary evil.
And it'll be good for us.

MERIAM

My children,
Where does your story begin?
At your birth?
Then it begins in horror.
At your father's birth?
Then it is a beautiful love story.
But if we go back further,
Perhaps we will discover that this love story

Has roots in violence and rape,
And that in turn,
The brute and the rapist
Had his origin in love.
So,
When they ask you to tell your story,
Tell them that your story
Goes back to the day when a young girl went
back to her native village to engrave her grandmother's name
on her gravestone.

Why didn't I tell you?
There are truths that can only be revealed
when they have been discovered.

NOTARY

Maybe we pushed too hard to discover the truth?

Text: Grzegorz Ziółkowski
based on motifs from Wajdi Mouwad's drama *Scorched*
(trans. Linda Gaboriau),
with a fragment of the poem *Al-Atlal (Ruins)*
and a quotation from *Under the Volcano* by Malcolm Lowry
as well as with fragments of lyrics of *The Logical Song*
by Supertramp (authors: Richard Davies, Roger Hodgson)
and *Silence is Sexy* by Einstürzende Neubauten.
The performance text was to a large extent
elaborated during rehearsals
of STUDY || ROSA (www.grzeg-rosa.home.amu.edu.pl).