



Crows my love...
Marcel de Jong

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Summary:

On the edge of an old working-class neighbourhood lies a forgotten, leafy cemetery. Two elderly brothers, Wim and Albert, live in the caretaker's house next to the entrance. Apart from the occasional funeral, little to nothing happens there. Until a location scout discovers the place. A major media conglomerate wants to organise an event surrounding the death of one of their artists. The media circus that ensues around the public funeral is not exactly a shining example of sincerity.

Then a sinister black coffin is delivered...

Location:

De Bosdrift Cemetery (Hilversum, Holland). The coach house and caretaker's cottage, the hall and the gravel area behind it. The milkman from the story is located across the street.



Camera:

Largely static with recurring close-ups.

Music:

Dank sei dir Herr:

Aafje Heynis.

Ave Maria:

Aafje Heynis.

De doodgewoonste dingen:

Passe-partout.

Dragostea Din Tei:

O-Zone.

Waar blijft de tijd:

Jules de Corte.

The script features three worlds:

1. Within the cemetery gates, it seems as though time has stood still for 150 years. The brothers are taciturn, the caretaker's house is musty, and outside it always looks as though it has just rained. This classic atmosphere from the early 20th century pervades the entire story.
2. The people from the music world live in the here and now. A modern corporate hierarchy. The top brass are bored with status, possessions and self-aggrandisement. The lower ranks resolve the failures with bitterness or resignation.
3. At the Milkman's, everything is light, fresh and bright. A white coat and rosy cheeks. Shopping baskets and buttermilk. The 1950s.

The two main characters:

Wim the Undertaker:

Wim is a tense, grim-faced man of a certain age. He is not a talkative sort. His skin is translucent and pale, and he has a huge hooked nose. Thick flakes of dandruff lie on his shoulders. The ill-fitting black suit he wears has a shiny, worn lapel and looks like a family heirloom passed down from father to son for many generations. The funeral trade is Wim's life. He prefers to avoid living people. There is a good reason for this: Wim has a secret.

His brother Albert:

Albert is a real sweetheart. He has big, sad doggy eyes and looks a bit dim. He doesn't say much either. In fact, Wim is the only reason Albert is in the funeral business. He worries about his younger brother and supports him unconditionally. A thankless task. Albert's passion is playing the organ. In the auditorium stands a squeaky, leaky harmonium on which he provides musical accompaniment for the funerals.



Other characters:

The Delivery Man:	A family friend of the managers (and voice-over).
The Milkman:	The neighbour (shopkeeper) across the street.
The “Chokerman”:	The head of the sales/classical department at the record company.
The “Red Rat” :	The Chokerman’s subordinate.
The “Pink Wig” :	The female busybody of the sales/classical department.
The Pianist:	The deceased artist (seen only in photographs).
The Photographer:	The story begins with him.
The Handyman:	Set builder (foreman) at the record company.
The Red-Haired Girl:	The deceased beauty.
The Councillor:	Must approve the building plans.
Mother and Schoolteacher:	Only seen in Wim’s nightmares.
The Gardeners:	Caretakers of a rival cemetery.
Ladies with Poodles:	Customers of the Milkman.
The Audience:	Spectators at the midsummer night concert.
The Mourners:	Funeral attendees in the hall and participants in the procession.
The Construction Workers:	Builders of the concert stage and mausoleum.

Intro:

Voice-over with atmospheric footage and names of key figures:

“On the outskirts of the city lies an almost forgotten place: the Alder lane. It is quiet there. A long row of tall trees lines both sides. Surrounding it are small courtyards with workers cottages. Here and there stands a stately villa, hidden behind a hedge. Grand and classical, with slate turrets. In summer, you might hear a lawnmower. Sometimes a radio. But mostly, you hear nothing.”

First scene (set in the bluish twilight of dawn): a breathtaking opening shot of the avenue in 1900s style. Tree tops, rustling softly. A small roof with a dormer window above a hedge. In a tiny little garden, an old lady is enjoying her tea and the first rays of sunlight. She is surrounded by flower pots and is stroking the ears of a cat on her lap. A working-class neighbourhood with orange roofs, a wisp of smoke rising from the chimney.

Voice-over: *“Halfway along, the road splits around a small, round pond. It used to be a fountain. Next to it stands the former bathhouse, once the architectural gem of the Alder lane. Directly opposite is the caretaker’s house of My Love cemetery.”*

Image: surface of the pond, reflection, floating autumn leaves. Dudok-style bathhouse tower. Cemetery gate.

You see a window filled with dozens of bottles containing faded artificial flowers. Next to a grubby coffee machine, a small mop hangs over the tap. On the wall hangs a yellowed photograph of Queen Juliana and Prince Bernhard. Voice-over: *“This is where the story unfolds. Between the damp walls. The wilted flowers. And the birds... A story about Love and Death.”*

Outside, by a wheelbarrow leaning against the wall, the camera moves upwards along a scalloped, weathered eaves. A bird’s-eye view of the cemetery, lots of trees and a church tower/town on the horizon. At the word “death”, the camera movement stops and the title appears in the sky: “Crows my love...”

Voice-over: *“This is Wim.”*

Shot: Wim is hunched over the table doing the accounts. He stacks a few coins, licks the tip of his pencil and scribbles something in a notepad.

Voice-over: *“And this is his brother Albert”.*

The camera pans past a plate of cake and Albert comes into view. He holds the plate out to his brother and mumbles: *“Nice and fresh baked...”* Wim takes a slice, taps it briefly against his saucer and takes a small bite.

The camera moves towards the window, and outside stands a red delivery van with lettering on it. The Delivery Man, with several boxes clamped under his chin, slams the sliding door shut. The next scene begins the moment the door slams.

Second scene. A classic scene filmed from inside the grave (earth falls with a thud onto a glass pane). Sound: the mechanical thud of the car door ends with the echo of a wooden coffin. Through the clumps of earth, you can just make out some people dressed in black at the top of the hole.

Voice-over: *“Albert and Wim are the caretakers of the cemetery”.*

Another shovelful of earth follows.

You see Albert, craning his neck, singing behind his organ during a service in the hall. Behind him, a row of two or three mourners.

Voice-over: *"They receive the bereaved there."*

Wim opens two frosted-glass sliding doors; behind him stands a heavyset man and a sniffing woman wearing a veil.

Wim: *"This is our mortuary."* The shot of the sliding doors is a recurring image.

Voice-over: *"They conduct the funeral services."*

Wim and Albert face the audience and, with their hats held to their chests, shake hands with the people shuffling past. They bow their heads briefly. Wim says: *"My condolences"*. Albert says: *"My sincere condolences"*.

And again: Wim: *"My condolences"*. Albert: *"My sincere condolences"*.

Voice-over: *"And maintain the grounds"*.

A short series of tranquil atmospheric shots begins. Dilapidated monuments, ivy, a tap on a post, a broken grave chain...

Voice-over: *"In almost half a century, the brothers have become inseparable from their trade and this place"*.

You see the face of a mourning statue of an angel (in the story: Mathilde), a close-up of a raindrop hanging from rusty wrought iron, the statue of one of the columns next to the entrance with a bronze winged hourglass (with a broken wing tip). Voice-over: *"With the paths, the trees and the old names"*.

A robin flies away from a branch; out of focus monuments stand in the background. The series of shots ends with a shot looking straight up. Into the treetops.

Voice-over: *"But they're getting old"*.

You see a lovely shot of a path with two small black figures in the background standing by a wheelbarrow (this shot is repeated in the final scene).

Albert is sitting in a black suit with an apron on, on a chair in front of the oven.

Wim seals the mourning envelopes and places them on a pile.

Voice-over: *"Since a new, modern cemetery opened just a stone's throw away, business has been poor"*.

Wim stands by a modern fence watching three labourers with a tiny, grass-green excavator on caterpillar tracks. There is a white mist and the viewer looks over Wim's shoulder at the Gardeners. Around them stand some rather dull gravestones, arranged in rows, but the misty background is 100% white. One of the men spots Wim and shouts: *"Hey! There's that crow!"* Startled, Wim walks on, from the other side of the fence, too, there is only the white background. With perhaps a lantern and a faint wall or roof edge.

Milkman: *"Nothing lasts forever!"*

A man in a white suit, thick-rimmed glasses and enormous dentures hands a tiny packet (of cheese) across the counter with a broad smile. Filmed from a slightly odd angle from below. Fluorescent lighting, a perforated board and a lightbox with the brand logo in the background. All the shelves in his shop are completely filled with identical bottles of milk.

Milkman: *"Anything else?"*

Image: a stunning shot of the milkman's shop. This shot is repeated.

Wim steps out of the shop. Small, black and hunched over. Looking around suspiciously. You can hear the shop bell ringing as he closes the door behind him.

Voice-over: *"Wim is worried"*.

Wim is lying in a tiny attic room, fiddling with his pillow. A muffled melody plays in the background. In the darkened hall, you see Albert at his organ. He is practising enthusiastically. Wim gives up the struggle and plops down onto his pillow with a sigh.

Voice-over: *"Lying awake all night makes him grumpy, and the mornings are no fun."*

A clamour of birdsong. Wim opens the top part of the kitchen door and looks irritably into the foliage. For a moment, he lets out a short *"biss"*. The bird sounds stop immediately, but as soon as he goes back inside, there's another little chirp. Wim pokes his head out again. His beady eyes dart viciously. Then it's really quiet. As he closes the door, a grin briefly appears on his face.

Voice-over: *"Just like the afternoons"*.

It's pouring with rain; Albert is standing outside next to a few buckets. Wim is standing inside by the window, pointing at one of the buckets. Albert takes something out that looks like a window squeegee and holds it up. Wim points furiously at the buckets with a pointed finger. Albert has no idea what he means and stands there looking lost. Or: the brothers are washing up. Albert carefully places the wet cups on a tea towel. Wim picks them up and dries them. He looks critically at a cup for a moment, holds it up to the light and throws it back into the soapy water with a splash.

Voice-over: *"And the evenings..."*

Albert proudly places a steaming dish on the table: *"Meatballs in spicy paprika sauce"*. Wim sits with his arms firmly crossed and says: *"Yuck!"*

Voice-over: *"Otherwise, everything goes on as usual at My Love"*.

Wim is doing something that looks like stuffing a turkey. His sleeves are rolled up. You can't see his hands, only his upper body and his heaving shoulders.

Then you see him from behind. He is standing in the washroom at a metal table with a naked, dead man lying on it. Wim is standing exactly in the centre. Then you see Wim from the front. He takes a few last pieces of cotton wool from a bag and starts stuffing again (...the body cavities). Something outside catches his attention. Through the window pane, you see Albert standing next to a large angel on the gravel area behind the hall. It is a slapstick moment. Albert has apparently driven a wheelbarrow into the angel. And one of the angel's raised arms has snapped downwards slightly. Albert tries to bend the arm back into place. Wim, behind the table, looks outside again, this time somewhat irritated. Albert has managed to get the arm back into place. Satisfied, he takes a step back. Then, unexpectedly, the angel's hand snaps downwards (not the arm). It dangles limply from the wrist.

Voice-over: *"A solitary funeral, a rare visitor..."*

Image: The Delivery Man enters the ridiculously narrow hallway. First you see a huge box, then the Delivery Man.

Delivery Man: *"Alcohol and greasy cotton wool! Keep away from open flames. Just thought I'd mention it."*

Visibly relieved to have left the cramped hallway, he plonks the items down on the living room table. He leans over the box with an outstretched arm, takes a slice of chocolate cake from a dish and says: *"Chocolate? Feeling a bit creative, Bert?"*

Voice-over: *"The days slip by unnoticed"*

Brothers on a bench. Eating bread by a wheelbarrow full of branches.

Voice-over: *"Until one day..."* (voice-over ends here).

The brothers are in the living room of the caretaker's house. Wim is sitting at the table and you see him from behind; Albert is bent over with a half-full coffee pot. Then he sees something outside. He nudges his brother, who looks up angrily. Albert gestures with his eyes towards the window. Wim turns, leaning back in his chair, and reluctantly looks towards the window. Outside, by the gate, a young boy in a checked lumberjack shirt is standing on top of a ladder. The brothers duck slightly behind the curtain for cover. *"What on earth is he doing there?"* Albert is taller than Wim. At the bottom of the window frame you can see Wim's furrowed brow and, directly above it, Albert's surprised face. The boy takes a camera out of a canvas bag and takes a few photos of one of the bronze ornaments on the column next to the gate. He climbs down from the ladder and walks along the front of the building, out of the brothers' sight. Albert and Wim tumble, half over each other, into the narrow hallway. There is a tiny window in the front door. Wim looks out and Albert asks what he can see. The hallway is pitch black and, in the whitish-yellow light, Wim's skin looks as though it's made of candle wax. The boy lays the ladder on its side and takes another photo of the façade. Albert: *"What is he doing?! What is he doing?!!"*

The boy starts a small car and skilfully manoeuvres it onto the road. Wim steps back from the window and furrows his brow questioningly.

New scene: The Delivery Man is sitting at the table, shoving something into his mouth with his thumb and says: *"On a different note, I know you're not at all keen to hear this; your mum isn't doing very well."* Wim looks up, frowning, as if to say: how on earth do you know that? The Delivery Man: *"The rumour mill... Shouldn't you lot just pop round to see her? Bite the bullet, sweep it under the carpet?"*

Albert looks at Wim in alarm and says: *"Anyone fancy some more coffee?"* Delivery Man: *"You'll regret it if you don't act now."* Wim glances at his watch, then at his brother, and taps the glass face of his watch. Then he stands up, pushes his chair back and makes an inviting gesture towards the hallway. Albert (with the coffee pot) calls out: *"That was lovely!!!"* Wim pushes the door shut and the Delivery Man just manages to say through the crack: *"Just do it..."* The door clicks shut and Wim says to himself: *"Not in this life!"*

Outside, beneath the weeping willows on the driveway, there is a black ambulance van and a hearse. Two men are struggling to carry a heavy fibreglass coffin/casket inside. As soon as the coffin has been pushed through the door, a tall man steps a little way into the hall. He has a large grey moustache and is going bald. He is holding a hat in front of his stomach. With a dejected, sorrowful expression, he says: "*Such a shame...*"

Wim is standing in the hall by a black bakelite wall telephone: "*Well, I'm not sure about that... Well... I suppose we'll just have to...*"

Wim pokes his head through the door of the laundry room (a soft ray of sunlight is streaming in from the side). He is a little startled when he sees the deceased. Lying on the steel table is a naked woman of about 22. She is stunningly beautiful, with snow-white skin, freckles and red curls. A sort of Celtic Pre-Raphaelite princess. Albert stands there, wearing an apron and gloves, looking lost. He holds up a bag of cotton wool and looks at Wim with an uncomfortable, questioning expression. As if to say: do we really have to do this? Wim nods briefly with a frown and makes a 'well, er, just do it' gesture with his head. Then he disappears behind the door again.

Wim is raking the gravel outside when Albert bangs on the window inside. Wim walks over to the window and Albert's voice sounds muffled through the glass: "*There are three gentlemen here to see you.*"

In the living room, two men are standing in front of the window overlooking the driveway. A large, heavysset man with a shaved nape, a centre parting, a dark red jacket with a choker, and a tall, thin man in a brown leather jacket (with knitted cuffs) and red, greasy, slicked-back hair. The boy/photographer in the checked shirt is also sitting on an upturned chair. He's leaning against the backrest with his arms crossed, looking friendly and relaxed. The two men are discussing what appears to be a rather impressive car parked in the driveway. The Choker Man: "*...He came this morning to show off his new car. I just beat him to it!!! He was staring at my rims, man, he nearly choked!*" The red-haired employee bears a resemblance to a rat, both in appearance and manner. He says nothing, but chuckles at every word his boss utters. Wim enters the living room and gives Albert a piercing look. Non-verbal irritation at the sloppy introduction.

The Chokerman: "*Mint, innit?... Oh...*" He glances behind him and realises that the person he wanted to speak to has just entered the room.

The Chokerman turns round, sits down and holds out his arm towards the boy in the checked shirt. He makes a wobbly "hand it over" gesture with his thick fingers. The boy hands him a DVD case. The Chokerman adopts a solemn posture and places the case upright on the table. "*Gentlemen... How would you feel if this man were given a spot here in your lovely cemetery?*"

He seems to be waiting for their jaws to drop, but the caretakers stare blankly at him and the case. The Chokerman's gaze darts briefly over the furnishings of the caretaker's house.

"*Newspaper? Radio, TV?*" The brothers look uncomfortable. Albert pours coffee and says, as he sets the cup down in front of the Chokerman: "*We don't have a TV.*"

The Chokerman realises that his dramatic introduction has completely missed the mark. He glances wearily at the floor, makes a strange "*Pah pa paah*" sound, and then gets straight to the point in a matter-of-fact tone: "*One of the artists from our stable more or less kicked the bucket last week...*". As he says this, he casually pushes Albert's coffee aside and taps the bottom of the box where the cup used to be. The Chokerman: "*A massive old fart, but particularly popular with the oldies.*" He leans back. "*The sales department wants to see if they can turn it into a bit of a Jim Morrison thingy. We want to organise a small event with some TV coverage. Preferably back there.*" He nods towards the gravel path behind the auditorium. The Chokerman hands Wim a cheque, folded around his middle finger: "The other half will follow after the event." Wim looks at the amount and briefly sags to his knees (subtly). Then his eyes take on a completely different look. Albert: "*There's room, but an event...*" Wim pushes his brother, the cheque clamped firmly to his chest, backwards: "*No problem at all.*"

Wim opens the sliding doors: "*This is our mortuary.*" The Chokerman completely ignores him and walks out of shot behind Wim without looking back: "*Great! It's all going to be fine.*"

Directly behind the hall lies a gravel area. Opposite the French doors stands the battered angel. Behind it grows a hydrangea, and immediately behind that are the first gravestones. The Chokerman stands amongst them: "*We were thinking somewhere around here*". He makes a cross in the gravel with his heel and gestures, like an air traffic controller, with flat hands in the direction of the hall. As the group heads back inside, the Chokerman says to the Red Rat: "*A bite somewhere? I'm dangerously close to cannibalism.*" Wim lets them lead the way, rubbing his hands together, and bows in a welcoming gesture towards the kitchen door. He has a big, broad grin on his face. As they pass, the Red Rat hisses grimly and threateningly: "*And not a peep, capiche?*"

The milkman to a customer (filmed from slightly below again): "*...The Pianist!!! Right across the street! They're getting a small fortune for it and it's all on TV!*" The doorbell rings and Wim comes in. The view is like a security camera, filmed from the ceiling in the corner behind the counter. Standing in front of the counter are two women, one carrying a poodle in her arms. The Milkman to the ladies: "*Anything else?*"

New scene/close-up: you see a small silver frame containing a portrait of a sweet-faced girl (the girl with the red curls). It stands, surrounded by flowers, on the lid of a white coffin. Then you see Albert from behind, playing the organ. Through the music, you can hear the wailing of an elderly woman. Wim stands uneasily beside the organ. He is clearly struggling with this funeral. You see the front row of mourners. The older woman (also with red curls) slides off her chair, weeping, and falls forward over the coffin. Her husband supports her arm, forming a sort of chain (daughter, mother, father). The woman coughs a little whilst weeping. Then you see the chapel doors from the outside (grey net curtains). The woman coughs more and more. The scene ends with two shots of the cemetery. You see an aisle lined with graves. The coughing becomes more intense and turns into a wheeze. During the final, still image of the cemetery, a truly nasty wheeze (as in vomiting) echoes across the grounds.

The next scene is exactly the same as the one in which the brothers were introduced, but set in the evening. Wim stacks up some coins and scribbles something in a notepad, this time with a smile. The camera pans to the side and Albert comes into view. This time there are three large platters of untouched cake on the table. Wim stares intently at his brother and silently hands him a thick envelope. Albert pulls out a stack of leaflets and asks: "*What's this?*" Wim taps the front of the top leaflet with his bony finger. Albert: "An excavator?" Wim: "*From the deposit! Delivered tomorrow afternoon!*" He shoves the leaflets against Albert's stomach, pokes them twice and strides past the camera into the hall. Albert calls after him, craning his neck: "*What on earth are we supposed to do with an excavator?*"

Early in the morning, the doorbell rings. The Red Rat stands at the door, looking bored. He's a lot less cheerful without his boss. "*I've come to pick up a scribble.*" As he passes, he hands Albert a script consisting of two A4 pages and places a thick stack of paper on the table. With a theatrical flourish, he pulls a fountain pen from his inside pocket, screws the cap onto the back and, in a sickeningly condescending manner, taps it twice against Wim's nose. He leans over the documents and unfolds the stack at the corner. Albert reads aloud: "*Tuesday morning: generator installation... What's a generator?*" The Red Rat looks at Albert and taps impatiently and insistently at the bottom of the last sheet of the mountain of paper. Red Rat: "*Juce for the light.*" Wim nervously signs his name and looks up in alarm: "*Tuesday?! That's impossible, we've got a funeral then!*" The Red Rat grabs his briefcase, flips the locks open and drops the pile of paper into the briefcase with a thud. When the case is closed, a cold look comes over his eyes. Red Rat: "*Can't is not an option. Filming starts in three days.*" As he walks out the door, three enormous lorries turn into the driveway. Several men jump out of the cabs and within seconds the quiet atmosphere turns into that of a noisy building site. From behind a lorry, a new character emerges: the Handyman. He stops at the gate, looks up from his clipboard and sighs despondently: "*Welcome to the valley of tears.*" Then Wim comes rushing over. Albert follows close behind and is almost run over by a forklift. Wim: "*What on earth is going on?!!*" Handyman: "*Ah! Do you run the shop here?*" The trio walk back onto the site, the Handyman leading the way. He surveys the surroundings critically and says: "*The good news is: we'll be out of here in five days...*" The man strides decisively onto the site, leaving the two brothers behind in despair.

Early the next morning, Wim draws back the curtains in the living room. "*Hub?*" The window remains dark. Then: the faces of Wim and Albert, outside in their bathrobes. Albert tilts his head questioningly. Then you see them from behind in front of a photograph of a huge winged hourglass. (A close-up of the damaged ornament on the column next to the entrance.) A huge advertising banner has been attached to the building. Almost as big as the building itself. Above it reads: '28 July: Midsummer Night Concert: a final farewell...' And in small letters: 'Ode to H.G. Proust'. Faintly in the background, you can see a huge, dreamy portrait of the Pianist. Albert, raising his eyebrows at the hourglass: "*Why didn't they use the other one?! That one's still in one piece...*" Behind them, a large silver car pulls up and the Chokerman steps out. He wraps his jacket around his shoulders and looks contentedly at the banner. "*Well, I hear things are running smoothly here? That always gives me a warm feeling.*" The Chokerman walks towards the entrance, the brothers stumble along behind him. Albert: "*Midsummer's Night, hasn't that already been?*" At the entrance, a few carpenters are busy. They are cladding the columns with wooden panels. Here too, banners hang (printed on canvas). As they walk past, the Chokerman leans to one side, points and asks: "*Will it stay like that?*" Then he answers Albert's question: "*... Oh come on, no one is that clever.*"

In front of the camera, two men wearing hard hats are looking at a floor plan. The Handyman is standing partly behind them, looking at the Chokerman and the brothers by the entrance, and pokes his head between the workmen. The Handyman says in a warning tone: "*It starts with an A, ends with a 'hole' and pays the bills*". The two men turn their heads and watch in alarm as the Chokerman walks towards them. They rush out of shot. The Handyman remains standing.

The Chokerman gives a nod towards Wim, who has stayed with Albert by the columns.

The Chokerman: "*Has Old Bones seen it yet?*"

Handyman: "*Before the permit? Doesn't seem very sensible to me...*"

The Chokerman: "*Brilliant!!!*"

The Chokerman walks onto the gravel field, and the Handyman calls after him with a cynical joke: "*My psychiatrist thinks I'm a genius!*"

The camera follows him, and behind the caretaker's house you can see a grandstand and a tilt-shaped stage (like an open-air theatre).

Scene by the kitchen door. A builder knocks on the doorframe and Albert (wearing an apron) pokes his head round the corner. The builder (seen from behind) glances inside as if looking for someone. He says: "*Is, eh...*", then holds up a dusty angle grinder and says: "*I've forgotten my flange*". Albert glances at the angle grinder, looks at the builder in confusion and says blankly: "*And it won't work without the flange, I take it?*" The builder turns around and walks out of the frame towards someone on the site. He shouts: "*Have you seen my flange?!!*" Albert remains standing behind the half-closed barn door, staring blankly ahead.

A gloved thumb presses a large red button. You hear a sputtering sound, and then a chugging diesel engine starts up. A gridded flap closes in front of the button. The camera pans back and you see the Handyman, the Chokerman and Wim standing by a violently shaking, battered, yellow generator. Wim is holding a cup and saucer in his hand. "Yees!" says the Handyman, and he pats the angular machine contentedly. The Chokerman stands slightly bent over and asks: "Is it working?" Satisfied, he takes the coffee and stirs it with a tinkling vertical spoon. In the background, the Handyman winds a cable around his thumb and elbow. The camera is now positioned a little lower and you can see some green treetops in the background. The Chokerman: "My grandad used to be a market gardener... Out in the fields all day, with your hands in the soil. Looovely!" In the background, you can hear the diesel engine and there's a thick blue haze hanging in the air. Wim catches a glimpse of something out of the corner of his eye; he glances to the side and his breath catches. Through the foliage and the fence next to the entrance, he catches his first glimpse of a new character. With all the noise in the foreground and background, the person is hard to make out. It is a stunningly beautiful girl with pink-dyed hair in two playful ponytails. She is giving instructions to someone who is unloading something. The dark green foliage is damp, creating dreamy lens effects. The Chokerman keeps babbling on, but the sound of his voice and the roaring engine fade into the background, giving way to a sickly sweet melody. Wim pretends politely for a moment that he is listening, but soon his eyes return to the girl. Through the greenery, you see a close-up of a pert little nose and a gentle smile with beautiful teeth. Then the lady walks backwards onto the site, swaying gracefully. She has a lovely figure. When she reaches Wim, she turns around. The music stops abruptly with the sound of a needle being scraped off a record. The girl turns out to be an older woman with an incredibly grumpy expression on her lined face. But that's not all: she's covered in piercings that are far too big, and her messy pink hairstyle seems to sit crookedly on her head.

The Handyman spots the lady (Pink Wig) and turns out to know her well. He says: "My arse is suddenly itching like mad," and immediately takes off. The woman looks at Wim blankly and says: "Are you in charge here? Good, have you read the documents and know what's going to happen?" Wim looks bewildered: "Documents?" Pink-Wig: "Yes, everyone's been given documents; it's all in there!" Wim: "I haven't been given any documents." Pink-Wig: "Oh? So you haven't read the documents?!" Wim: "I don't have any documents..." Pink-Wig: "Yes! We're not getting anywhere like this, of course!" She walks off angrily. The camera pans back and you see the Handyman standing by a tubular frame. He looks up: "Which idiot put this here!?" A steel tube shoots into view from the side. Just a few millimetres from Wim's nose. A construction worker walks past: "Watch out, Gramps". A carousel shot begins. Wim is standing in the middle on the gravel behind the auditorium and the camera slowly starts to circle round him. It's like an anthill around him. Crates, cables and trusses. The screeching engine of a forklift truck, someone shouts another warning, a din. As the camera pans upwards, you just catch a glimpse of Wim sinking to his knees, groaning.

You're looking in through the kitchen door from outside. Wim is sitting at the table, staring into space. Albert opens the door and says, *"Don't worry so much, just let it happen."* He knocks a plate of potatoes into the bin with a bunch of cutlery. *"They're here..."* At that moment, a rat jumps out of the bin. Albert turns round and points outside in shock: *"We've got rats!"*

Conversation between Pink-Wig and Wim in the mortuary room:

Wim is standing bent over in the mortuary. There is an open light oak coffin, and inside lies a small grey man with an enormous knot in his (red/grey/blue) tie. Wim adjusts the knot slightly as Pink-Wig walks into the room. She is so disinterested and stiff that she doesn't even notice the coffin. Pink-Wig: *"I heard there were some problems?"* Then she sees the dead man and recoils in shock. *"Wow!"* She suddenly takes on a human air and, whilst continuing the conversation, avoids looking at the box. She does this by gazing, somewhat fearfully, with her eyes turned to one side, at a corner of the ceiling. Wim: *"We saw a rat running about last night."* The Pink-Wig: *"Rats? But darling, I work within the music trade."* Meanwhile, Wim is completely absorbed in his work again. He takes a step back and admires his handiwork, tilting his head. Wim says, wiping his hands on a cloth: *"That marvellous sense of release... As soon as life drains away, the eyes sink back into their sockets. Nothing but pain leaving the body."* The Pink Wig turns on her heel, back straight, and walks as stiff as a board towards the exit door: *"Thank you for this useful information"*.

Beeps, a lorry in the driveway. The Handyman pokes his head through the kitchen window: *"Guys! They're unloading your lawnmower."*

Wim and Albert rush outside. A bored driver lowers the tailgate. Apart from the colour (which is grey), it's exactly the same little excavator as the one at the modern cemetery. It's still wrapped in a plastic cover with some pieces of cardboard. The driver rips them off. Albert (while Wim signs for it): *"It's rather lovely, to be honest..."*



It's getting dark outside. We're looking in from outside at the lit-up kitchen. Wim seems to have waited until all the workmen had gone home. He grabs his coat, and Albert and the Delivery Man follow him. The Delivery Man: *"Have you ever driven one of these?"* Wim climbs into the cab and examines all the buttons carefully. Albert gasps excitedly: *"That key! You need to flick that key first!"* Wim presses a button and the lights shine brightly into the camera. He smiles smugly. Then he fiddles about on the dashboard and the little vehicle lurches forwards. Then lurches backwards with a sharp jolt. Wim looks startled for a moment. When he relaxes, he puts his foot on the accelerator and from that moment on there's no stopping it. Jerking and squeaking, the machine lurches across the gravel (Wim sits frozen and lopsided). The Delivery Man jumps aside and the digger disappears round the corner behind the building. Albert and the Delivery Man run after it in a panic. As the camera reaches the corner of the building (where the kitchen door is), you see the exact moment when Wim comes to a halt with a thud against Mathilde, the statue of the angel. The statue tips over and Wim bangs his head hard against the windscreen. One of the spotlights is dangling down and shines on a cloud of steam rising from under the bonnet.

Albert and the Delivery Man carry Wim into the kitchen. *"Watch out for the threshold."*

Wim is sitting in front of a weathered wall mirror with a small flannel on his forehead. In the background, the doorbell rings.

The Delivery Man is sitting next to Wim on a chair: *"My aunt spoke fluent French after a blow like that."*

Wim looks in the mirror, carefully removes the cloth, and sees a purple bruise on his forehead: *"Merde!!!"*

The Delivery Man looks at Albert (who has just let two gentlemen in): *"Well?"* (as in: 'What did I tell you?').

From the hall, the men carry a slightly eerie black coffin inside.

In the background, you hear Albert say: *"Oh dear, it'll be absolutely packed with people here tomorrow... Pfff uh... Just put it under the table for now"*.

The coffin is (half out of shot) carefully slid under the living room table.

Next scene: A funeral, the following day. The procession across the cemetery sets off from the hall. Wim grabs a wreath from the wood-coloured coffin, as if it were a horse's saddle, and gestures angrily for the pallbearers to start walking. He has huge dark circles under his eyes and is wearing a purple cloth (over his forehead) under his hat. His hat is askew because of this, making him look a bit like a rock star. The procession has to stop for two construction workers in dungarees, who are lifting a number of scaffolding planks across the path. Once the items are in place, one of the construction workers says: *"Come on, lads"*. He gestures with both hands (like someone giving directions to a reversing car) and remains calmly in place as the procession passes by. Then you see the procession from the front. Wim is large in the frame. Behind him is the coffin with its bearers, and behind them the bereaved. On the right-hand side, you see the silhouette of a tower of scaffolding pipes. You hear someone hammering loudly on a resonating pole. At the top, a stooped labourer stands up straight. He looks at the procession and shouts to a colleague standing slightly lower down: *"Did you order six planks?"* Wim's face speaks volumes. The other man also stands up straight, looks at the procession and shouts to someone off-screen: *"Josh!!! They're making off with your toolbox!!!"* You see Wim cringing, gritting his teeth. At that moment, the Handyman slides into the frame from the side. Wim hisses and gestures irritably with his hand in front of his stomach, so that the procession behind him cannot see. He tries to keep it as solemn as possible and snorts: *"Go away!"* The Handyman keeps his neck ramrod straight and says with a twisted mouth: *"A request from the bigwigs... The lads have started work on the monument today and can't do with any onlookers there for the time being. Could you keep an eye out for any unauthorised blokes..."* Wim is practically bursting with rage and hisses once more from the depths of his being. The Handyman walks away from the statue in a gentle curve, as if driving a car, and says: *"You're the best!"*

Second conversation between Pink-Wig and Wim in the washroom (they're warming up to each other a bit and there's a connection). Wim, with a purple-and-yellow bump on his forehead, is sitting in a suit, recovering from the chaotic funeral, and cleaning the inside of a bottle with some scraps of paper. His hat and a few instruments are lying on the washbasin. Pink-Wig enters and says: *"I saw you've christened your new toy? The lads have put it to one side for a bit, you don't mind, do you?"* Wim looks down, bent over, sadly between his legs at the floor. It looks as if he's about to cry. Pink-Wig: *"Are you all right?"* Wim shrugs his shoulders jerkily and remains silent. Pink-Wig looks tired: *"I've just been sacked on the spot."* Wim looks at her in shock. Pink-Wig: *"I'm just going to do nothing for five minutes. The music industry, it seems fun. Earn enough for the bills, and make sure you don't quite hang yourself. You have to find a bit of a balance there, so to speak..."* Her phone rings: *"Ah, they need me again!"* She answers: *"Doormat speaking..."*

It's the evening before the concert: the dress rehearsal. The Chokerman is standing in front of the stage, talking to a musician behind a grand piano. The Chokerman: *"How long is that piece going to last?"* The musician holds up a piece of paper and points to a section of text. The Chokerman: *"Twenty minutes?! Nonsense, everyone'll be asleep by then. Two minutes max!"* The Chokerman walks off-screen to the left and the camera moves back slightly to the right. There stands Albert. He says, smiling uncertainly: *"I play the piano too."* An awkward moment, as the musician ignores Albert in a painfully blunt manner. The camera shifts further to the right. There stands a woman with a stack of papers and a headset with a microphone. She gestures with her arms and says to a man who is apparently due to present the event: *"And then you come round that and stand here... like this"* (she points in an arc), *"then the first part: good evening, blah blah blah"*. The presenter interrupts her: *"And this is where I burst into tears?"* The conversation continues, but the camera moves further to the side along the edge of the stage. The director: *"No, no, only when she starts crying, as you turn around..."* (The sound fades away somewhat muffled.) Then you see the structure beneath the stage. The camera pans on and stops at a rat. The creature sniffs around a bit and starts to walk. Meanwhile, the woman's voice echoes indistinctly through the speakers in the background. You see the rat run into a crate full of cables. There is an unexpected bang with smoking sparks. You see the stage against the evening sky. The bright theatre spotlights go out in groups. The sound also falls silent. Then, in the foreground in front of the silhouette of the stage, a person springs up. (As if he'd tied his shoelaces and suddenly stood up straight.) It is the Chokerman. He says, his eyes darting from left to right and with a grin from ear to ear: *"A botched dress rehearsal... Brilliant!!!"*

The procession is being prepared at a hideous petrol station (somewhere on an industrial estate). Two black carriages and about eight gigantic horses. They are covered with black cloths and wear a creamy-white plume of feathers on their heads. Every now and then a horse rears up on its front legs and snorts. The Red Rat is on the phone, his face flushed. The Chokerman stands with his hands in his pockets, playing with his shoe sole and a small stone. Wim looks lost. Then an old Mercedes comes tearing up. The door is flung open and the Red Rat hurriedly grabs an urn from the passenger seat. The Chokerman stands with his back to the car and says, staring emotionlessly at the ground: "*the main attraction*". The Red Rat nimbly climbs onto the side of the hearse in a single step, opens the (empty) coffin a crack and plonks the urn inside. Then he waves his index finger towards the rear carriage and shouts: "*We're ready!*"

The cemetery is bustling. In the foreground stands a production van with its door open. Inside, you can see brightly coloured screens; outside, it is grey and slightly misty. A woman standing next to the van has a phone wedged between her neck and shoulder. As soon as the first horses come round the corner in the distance, she runs into the trailer and closes the door. As the procession draws nearer, the Ave Maria swells from two speakers on the roof. The procession strides majestically into the street. Wim and Albert lead the way. The road is cordoned off with ribbons and there are many elderly people at the entrance. The large advertising banner has been removed and replaced by a number of banners. The two columns next to the entrance have been made twice as tall, and two enormous classical floral arrangements hang from them. Above the gate, the winged logo hangs between draped cloths with fringes and tassels. Everything is in black and cream. Behind the columns, you can just make out the scaffolding structure. Albert, under his breath: "*If Dad had seen this...*" Wim nods; he can hardly take it all in.

The opening scene of the TV recording is shown on the screen of an antique 1950s television: the sorrowful faces of the visitors in the auditorium. Then you see the hall from above. At the front stands the coffin, in Victorian style, laden with flowers. A black cloth lies over it, bearing the hourglass logo in silver. Behind it stands a choir. Where Albert's organ used to be, there is now a grand piano, and in the aisle lie rails along which three men on their hands and knees are moving a camera. Long banners hang between the windows, the logo embroidered on these too. For a brief moment, two giggling little boys appear on screen, half-hiding. A man with a headset tugs briefly at the cameraman's sleeve, points to someone in the audience, and traces a tear down his cheek with his finger. On the 1950s-style screen, you see the weeping visitor. (When the TV is in shot, the sound is tinny.) Then you see Wim and Albert standing next to the coffin; they are clearly deeply moved. A red dot appears on Wim's lapel. The two boys turn out to have a laser pointer. Wim sees it and tries to wave it away. Then the red dot flashes towards Wim's crotch. You can hear the boys' laughter through the dramatic choral singing. Wim is aware of the wobbling red dot on his crotch and is mortified. He is practically bursting with embarrassment. Just at that moment, the camera focuses on Wim's face. He appears in close-up on the old screen.

In the next scene, standing above the open grave, the pallbearers carefully lower the coffin from their shoulders. As they do so, they hold the coffin at a slight angle, and for a moment you hear a rumbling sound followed by a loud thud. It is the urn, rolling through the empty coffin like a bowling ball.

It is dark and you can see the entire stage of the open-air concert. A misplaced string of coloured lights hangs above the stage. Behind the grand piano, a pianist finishes his piece and the presenter steps forward. For a moment it seems as though he wants to say something, but he remains silent, nods his head forward and pinches the corners of his eyes between his thumb and forefinger. From the side, the Chokerman comes hobbling over. He snatches the microphone from the presenter's hand and places his hand on the man's neck. *"It's not easy, is it, lad?"* At the corner of the stage, the presenter is already being met and helped off the stage by two people. The Chokerman leans forward, points his arm towards the bar at the back of the audience and booms over the speakers: *"Give him a drink, he's earned it."* The Chokerman pauses for a moment, swings the cord of his microphone in front of him like a born performer, and continues: *"We all miss him... Hans... his friends were allowed to call him Hans, Hans had not only great talent, but also a big heart. He loved his craft, his colleagues, and had a soft spot for young talent"*. From a distance, you can see a lovely view of the festival site. The sound booms out of the speakers, distorted: *"A soft spot that many a music lover shares with him."* Now you see the street in front of the cemetery. The stage lights cast a glow over the building, and you can see some activity and lights at the corner of the building. The sound is now heavily distorted. *"We are also thinking of these people tonight... A new star among us, ladies and gentlemen..."* Fade to black...

The scene opens with the ridiculous sight of a man singing. It turns out not to be an opera star, but a terribly tacky construction worker (short, bald and chubby). He sings, in a wildly exaggerated manner, a section of the first chorus of a summer hit by the Romanian band Ozone. *"Ma-ia-bii, ma-ia-bu, ma-ia-ba, ma-ia-ba-ba!"* Then you see him and another labourer standing on the freshly dug grave (the foundation of the monument yet to be built). The little hit is playing on a radio. The tacky Construction Worker performs a moonwalk-style dance (despite his enormous belly, he dances quite well). The Construction Worker at the front is on his knees, removing the formwork. He throws a plank away with a loud thud. The camera pans back and you now also see the Delivery Man: *"Fancy a round?"* The camera pans further back and you see Wim walking away angrily towards the kitchen door. Behind him, you can see the shape of the foundation. It is a sort of long track, with the tomb sealed off by a thick slab at the end and, at the front, a round flat disc with a round hole in the middle. The Delivery Man makes a sweeping, swinging motion (like a golf swing). His gaze follows the imaginary ball until it rolls into the imaginary hole. He pulls an amused "ah" face, says: *"You lucky ducks, your very own mini-golf course!"* and hops after Wim with a chuckle.

As they approach the kitchen door, Wim starts to stagger slightly as he walks. Behind the fence, he spots a small man in a suit who is quietly observing everything that's going on. Wim is riled up by the Delivery Man's jokes and quickens his pace towards the gate. He shouts in his shrill little voice: "*What' are you doing there!*" The little man is startled and tries to stammer out an explanation. Wim storms out, points with an outstretched arm towards the end of the street and shouts: "*No snoops allowed!*" He tugs the man's sleeve rather aggressively: "*Come on! Get lost!*" The man leaves, looking bewildered, and Wim storms back into the kitchen. The Delivery Man, who has watched everything from behind the gate, stands there for a moment, looking dazed. He turns round and follows Wim.

The Handyman opens the tarpaulin on a trailer, revealing two brand-new angels lying on top. Wim: "*Two?*" Handyman: "*One as a spare.*" He gestures towards the blurred monument in the background: "*I've got something else to show you...*" Wim and the Handyman are standing behind the monument by an open door. Handyman: "*We've put a door in there for you, so you can stow your junk away nicely.*" Wim places his hand on the wall next to the door. There are strange green smears on it. Wim (non-verbally): "*What's this?*" Handyman: "*That's algae.*" There is a brief silence. Handyman: "*...green paint.*" The two walk back to the trailer. All that can be seen of the monument in the background is a large bare block. Albert now emerges from the greenery behind them. He's holding a shovel and looks bewildered. Handyman to Wim: "*The chief wanted it all to look a bit less new. With some chicken shit it'd be green in a few weeks, but there wasn't time for that. This was good enough.*" Wim bends down and picks something up from the path. They are the fingers of a stone angel's hand. Brother Albert rubs the back of his head, stares blankly ahead and points his thumb towards the cemetery: "*Someone's already filled the hole!*" Wim holds up the piece of hand and asks: "*Mathilde?*" The Handyman: "*The... angel? We've, er, found it a nice spot.*" He turns his head away, hoping the subject will blow over quickly.

It's morning. Wim is standing in the shower room, turns on the tap and looks at the shower head with a mixture of anger and confusion. Only a tiny trickle comes out. When he steps out of the shower, he pokes his head round the corner of the living room and asks Albert: "*The shower?*" Albert points to the kitchen window. Wim looks through the window and, utterly astonished, points over his shoulder towards the outside: "*A fountain?!?*"

You now see the real fountain for the first time, surrounded by a small section of the monument. In front of the plinth of one of the new angels, the Chokerman and the Handyman have a brief chat. The Handyman smiles slyly, but triumphantly: "*Permit's sorted! Thanks to the Reaper Bros. They sent the councillor packing; he was livid.*" The Chokerman clicks his tongue and leans briefly on the Handyman's shoulder as he passes. Then he climbs onto a makeshift ladder made of beer crates. A small group of journalists appears to be standing around him. He holds up a stack of CD cases between his spread fingertips. The winged symbol is on the front case. Above it reads Requiem 1, below it H.G. Proust. He waits a moment with his neck craned until he has the attention of even the journalists at the back, and says: "*Dear friends...*"

Through the open door of the mortuary, you can make out a blurry image of the group of journalists by the fountain. Albert is busy rolling up socks into balls when the Pink Wig appears in the doorway and taps her fingers against the window. *"Isn't Wim here?"* she asks. Albert calls out towards the living room: *"Wiim!"*

They wait briefly and look in the direction of the room in exactly the same posture, but there is no response. Albert shrugs apologetically. The Pink-Wigged Woman pulls a sad little face and disappears from view for good. Outside, the gathering has now ended and, between the doors, you can just make out a large Land Rover driving off the grounds. The monument is largely hidden behind the greenery and remains unseen by the viewer.

You see a torn plastic bag rolling across the ground in the wind (tumbleweed). Everyone has left. Wim stands all alone, holding a tiny wicker bin in his hand, on the gravel area behind the hall. The camera pulls back. All around him, it's a complete shambles. Deep ruts have been driven into the gravel and there are planks, pipes and hundreds of crushed paper cups lying about. Helpless and rooted to the spot, he stammers his brother's name, looking towards the kitchen door.

The brothers are sitting at the living room table with the Delivery Man. They realise that the whole hullabaloo is over and they're enjoying themselves. The Delivery Man says to Wim: *"You got on quite well with that chameleon, didn't you?"* A small, cautious smile plays around Wim's mouth. The Delivery Man to Albert: *"Don't you think it's about time he got himself a wife?"* Albert smiles at the Delivery Man, and says as he pours the coffee (gently, but quick-witted for him): *"He knows where it ends, doesn't he?"* They laugh, and then: "Thud!" Wim kicks something hard with his foot. He glances diagonally under the table and slowly sits up straight. With wide eyes, he stares ahead and says silently, in deep shock: *"God help me..."*

In the next scene, the screen goes black. You hear a muffled rumbling, followed by a loud crack (dry wood splitting). Then you see a few fingers and a broad strip of light. The scene turns out to have been filmed from inside the coffin. You see the brothers holding the coffin lid in their hands. They look into the coffin, looking a bit disgusted and dazed. For a moment, at the bottom of the screen, you see a small spot circling. You hear the buzzing of a fly. Then you see Wim lean forward slightly and at the same time Albert tilts his head. As if they seem to be seeing something extraordinary. Then the horrifying penny drops. The scene cuts to the Milkman's face: *"Their very own mother! Forgotten, under the table! A horrific stink, obviously! ... that's to be expected after all this time."* The doorbell rings: *"Anything else?"*

You can see the building in the light of the streetlamps. It is night-time and a faint glow can be seen through the net curtains of the auditorium. You hear the squeaking harmonium; Albert is playing a highly dramatic, scratchy version of "De doodgewoonste dingen by Passepartout" Upstairs, the light comes on. You hear someone running down the stairs with a thud. Then you hear a bang and the sighing sound of an air organ deflating.

Dream 1.

You see the sun glinting through the bottom of a water bottle. The image has a sepia tint. In the distance, you hear the distorted voices of a group of cheering children. A series of flashes of images follows. Subtly distorted, seen through Wim's child's eyes. School camp in Hampshire. Some children are running ahead of him along the edge of the woods. Boys in black uniforms with shorts, their hair cropped in the pre-war style. The girls with plaits. The sunny mood changes, the tone becomes grim. The children stand in a circle around him and push him roughly back and forth. They shout: "*Murderer, murderer!!!*" Wim runs away and has to vomit. When he looks up, he sees, through an opening in one of the barracks, the swaying back of an old man. He is wearing a long white shirt with a black waistcoat and his trousers hang down to his ankles. The schoolmistress is sitting on a tall trunk against the wall, shaking violently. She sees Wim ducking away and screams his name. Next flash: the children are sitting at a long dining table. His schoolmistress slams an enamel plate down on the table. "*Right! And this is what peeping Tom is having for dinner tonight...*" The plate is filled with his own vomit. His classmates are roaring with laughter. You see a boy's mouth, laughing hysterically, with an overbite (fisheye). Wim turns around in a flash. The barracks have vanished. A little girl is standing in front of him. In the middle of the dunes. Wim recognizes his childhood crush. You hear him say: "*Mary? Meredith?... How are you?*" Mary has grown and is suddenly five years older. Wim: "*I haven't seen you in so long*". The surroundings change. The sand of the dunes has become the deck of a ship, and Mary has a black eye patch over her face. Wim: "*Have you... become a pirate?*" Mary looks Wim straight in the eye and says: "*Things have gone my way, lad... Unfortunately I've ended up with...*". The camera pans downwards. Where the viewer expects to see her feet, there are two wooden stakes. There are shoes at the bottom of the stakes, but they are pointing backwards. Mary screeches in a hideous witch's voice: "*TWO WOODEN CROWS!!!*"

Wim is awake and sitting bolt upright in bed, drenched in sweat. He first grabs his alarm clock and then turns towards the skylight. As he looks out, he catches his first glimpse, in the moonlight, of the newly completed monument. The scene continues by the wheelbarrow next to the kitchen window. The camera moves upwards along the wall. Behind the edge of the roof, a hideous monument slowly comes into view. A tasteless, ostentatious jumble of styles and materials. It is far too big and doesn't fit into the surroundings at all. Just as the camera reaches its highest point, Wim runs out onto the gravel yard in his pyjamas. He freezes and makes a strange sound. As if he wants to scream, but at the same time is gasping for breath.

New scene: Wim is sitting at the table, resting his cheek on his fist. His face is contorted and there is a deep wrinkle on his temple. He stirs his tea incessantly. The camera pulls back and the Delivery Man is also seen sitting at the table. He looks around and says: *"Isn't Albert here?"* Wim continues stirring at the same pace and slides an envelope towards the Delivery Man. The Delivery Man takes out a letter with a photo and reads aloud, somewhat theatrically: *"To my dearest little brother Willem... There is in the..."* The Delivery Man's eye falls on the photograph sticking out slightly from beneath the letter (the photograph remains unseen by the viewer). He looks at the photograph and sits up straight for a moment. He brings the letter up to his face and continues reading without saying a word. Then he drops the letter onto the table and stares blankly ahead. *"Bloody hell!"* He grabs the photo and examines it with his arm outstretched. *"Albert..."*

A sharp cut to the gossiping Milkman: *"... A girlfriend!!! He'd kept it a secret for years! A girl, well... a real looker!"* The doorbell rings and Wim shuffles in suspiciously. He watches the ladies as they leave the shop. The Milkman and Wim are alone for the first time. Milkman: *"There you go! Our film star!"* Wim looks tense and avoids eye contact. Milkman: *"Everything alright at My Love?"* Wim mumbles: *"It's going well..."* The Milkman sighs and stands up straight: *"Willem... How long have we known each other now?"* Wim looks away and shrugs. Milkman: *"Albert'll turn up again, I'm sure. She's so young, and he's practically antique. It's not going to last. Give him time."* Wim looks at the ground and mumbles almost inaudibly: *"I broke his organ."* Milkman: *"Oh come on! Everyone does something stupid now and then. You might kick a harmonica and puncture it, or leave some marbles at the top of the stairs... We're all human."* Wim's eyes widen and he looks at the Milkman's face in shock. The Milkman suddenly looks very serious and says: *"She was just a bloody nightmare, Wim. Anyone would've done the same."* Wim cringes, turns around and runs out of the shop. The Milkman calls after him: *"Organs can be repaired!"*

Wim is sitting in the living room, he's a bit scruffy. Albert has been missing for over a day; outside, it is gloomy and twilight. In the foreground sits a vague, out-of-focus figure wearing a top hat. Wim pours tea and asks silently: *"Sugar?"* Wim nods to himself and, using a pair of tongs, picks up two sugar lumps, dropping them carefully into the cup one by one. He sits down opposite the figure and remains silent. Then you see the figure from the other side of the table. It is a broom with Albert's coat draped halfway over it, and the hat on top. It is a rather eerie figure. Far too narrow, and the neck is missing. Wim: *"Not the best weather today, is it?"* The figure remains menacingly silent. Wim wakes with a start (he had fallen asleep, his head resting on his arm, and had slipped off it). It is dark in the room. The roof gives a loud, groaning bang. Wim's eyes dart in fright towards the ceiling. The figure is still sitting on the other side of the table. Motionless. A soft, wailing groan is heard. Wim jumps up and shakes the ghostly broom figure like a madman. He seems to startle himself in the process. He screams like a small child and jumps backwards in terror. The figure falls apart at his feet.

Dream 2.

In sepia tones with a distorted effect, you see (from above) a box of flowers on a grave. A number of people are standing around it. You see a modest version of the Chokerman. With tears in his eyes, he says softly and sincerely: *"We're going to miss you, lad"*. The camera pans to the side and you see the Handyman in a suit with an expression that says: *"You've done well all these years, thank you"*.

A gravestone is unveiled. The cloth falls and you read the name "H.G. Proust". As the camera pans back, you see a small, tasteful version of the grand monument. Then the atmosphere changes. The camera shoots forward, back to the name on the gravestone. Instead of the Pianist's name, it reads: "Tweety..." The children's voices swell once more: *"Murderer!"* Then you see Wim's mother. She joins in the shouting: *"Murderer!!!"* The camera moves downwards and in Wim's outstretched little hands lies a dead parakeet. The next scene is shocking: Wim's mother falls from a high Victorian staircase. She rolls down the steps, screaming, her head thudding against the steps. You hear the woman's wheezing from the auditorium again. Then you see a close-up of two white eyes rolled back. The camera pulls back and you see Wim's mother in a wheelchair with all sorts of metal braces around her forehead. You see the silhouette of the back of the wheelchair against a tall window. The wheelchair shakes like a madman. The camera swings to the side and there stands the Red Rat in a doctor's coat with a clipboard. Red Rat: *"So... You're the murderer?"* The coughing turns into demonic laughter. Then Wim opens a door: Albert stands startled in front of a wardrobe mirror and looks back. There are red circles of blush on his cheeks and he is wearing a tutu. The door swings open and in the wavering reflection you see the Pink-Wig. She is wearing a white christening gown and dozens of roses are woven into her curly hair. She whispers icily: *"Nothing is what it seems..."* As these words echo, you see a flash of the photo on the coffin from the beginning, of the girl with the red hair.

This is a crucial moment. It turns out that Albert made up the girlfriend and used a photo of the deceased girl (the red-haired Pre-Raphaelite princess) in his farewell letter.

You can see the girl on the table in the mortuary. Filmed from the ceiling. She doesn't look well. The skin around her nostrils and eyes is brown and shiny. She opens her eyes wide and says with a smile: *"Albert, my dearest..."*

In a flash, the girl lying on the floor transforms into Wim, lying there and waking up. The laughter echoes faintly in the distance, but the viewer is back in reality. It is still night. Outside, it is restless and stormy. The building creaks and the eerie, nightmare-like atmosphere lingers. The wailing, ghostly laughter sounds as if it is coming from downstairs. Wim puts on his slippers and wraps a blanket around his shoulders. The house is dark and the walls seem to glow. He peeks fearfully around the door and asks: "Mum, is that you?" In the mortuary room stands the tall, black coffin containing his mother. Ominous and terrifying, in the middle of the room. You see a ghastly ghostly apparition in the doorway. It is Wim himself, with the blanket pulled over his head. His enormous hooked nose pokes out of a small hole, which he clamps shut convulsively. Wim shuffles cautiously towards the coffin. He stretches out his trembling hand. The tension becomes unbearable. There is a thud. Wim seems to relax. He lowers the blanket and furrows his brow questioningly. Then he turns his head and looks back into the hallway. The sound is not coming from the chest, but from a small door on the side of the hall.

Wim creeps cautiously through the dark coach house and waits, crouched behind a carriage wheel. The wailing rumble grows louder and seems to be coming from the cellar. Wim takes a deep breath, braces himself and counts "3, 2, 1..." but he doesn't dare. One more time: "3, 2..." He flings open the heavy hatch. You see Wim from the cellar. He has pulled his head back and closed his eyes. Cautiously, he opens one eye. Then he sees the source of the sound... In a corner of the cellar sits his half-frozen brother. Curled up, whimpering, beneath a pile of cleaning rags and postbags. Next to him, an oil lamp and a bucket. Wim is welling up.

Now you can see the whole building from the front. The lights come on in the coach house. Then they go out and the lights in the hall come on.

Voice-over: *"And so every story has its ending..."*

Through the net curtains, you can just make out Wim supporting his brother. The light moves across the building, from left to right. It ends in the living room.

Voice-over: *"Or its beginning; it depends on how you look at it."*

In the next scene, Albert is sitting at the kitchen table. The blanket is draped over his shoulders and he is surrounded by treats. Wim pours something warm and carefully places it on the table in front of his brother: *"Here... I've put some honey in it."* He lovingly places his hand on his brother's shoulder and smiles with relief.

From outside, you see the window with the dried flowers again. An orange morning sun shines on the tip of the roof.

Voice-over: *"We're allowed to be here for a while, make our mistakes, and then we have to leave again... Meanwhile, time flies."*

Then you see the two brothers giggling at the table, shoulder to shoulder. Wim: *"You're the one with the wife!"* He nudges Albert with his shoulder. Albert chuckles: *"Yeah, we know where that ends up, don't we?"*

Voice-over: *"Does it make sense? ... Well, what can you say about it...?"*

They laugh. Wim looks to the side and says: *"Shall we bury Mum then?"* Albert stares into his hot chocolate and nods in agreement.

In the next scene, the brothers are standing outside on the gravel in front of the kitchen door. Shot from an oblique aerial angle. They are getting ready for the (private) funeral.

Voice-over: *“Taking a nap with the windows open, pigeons in the gutter and children’s voices in the garden. Summer freckles and yoghurt with strawberries... Or towards the end of the afternoon, cycling past the lake. The verge full of cow parsley with dancing flies above it. And that ominous stormy sky in the distance...”*

On a wheelbarrow lie two planks with the black coffin on top. Wim pushes and Albert carries a spade. As they walk past the camera, Wim points upwards. Three large snowflakes drift gently down in front of the lens. In the final scene, the brothers stand in a snow-covered wonderland. A beautiful shot of the cemetery. They stand, on the right side of the frame, with their hats held to their chests by the fresh grave. Voice-over: *“Or simply, something as simple as a snowflake. That melts on the tip of your tongue...”*

As Albert turns to walk back to the caretaker’s house, it turns out that Wim has been hiding a snowball under his hat all along. He hops a few steps on his toes and throws it at Albert’s neck.

Voice-over: *“That’s enough, isn’t it?”*

The closing tune begins: *Waar blijft de tijd* by Jules de Corte, and the credits start rolling on the left of the screen. As the text slowly scrolls up, the two brothers roll around in the snow, roaring with laughter. Like two young children...

Marcel de Jong

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On the edge of an old working-class neighbourhood lies a forgotten, leafy cemetery. Two elderly brothers, Wim and Albert, live in the caretaker's house next to the entrance. Apart from the occasional funeral, little to nothing happens there. Until a location scout discovers the place. A major media conglomerate wants to organise an event surrounding the death of one of their artists. The media circus that ensues around the public funeral is not exactly a shining example of sincerity.

Then a sinister black coffin is delivered...

