

THE INCOMPLETE RECORDED WORKS OF A DEAD BODY

a radio play

by ed hime

PasB Script

SCENE ONE - STUDIO NARRATION

MALONE (VO) The BBC in association with the Takei Gallery Tokyo
presents *The Incomplete Recorded Works of a Dead Body*.

SCENE TWO: - ANSWERPHONE

BABAK (ANSWERPHONE MESSAGE) Hi Dale, it's Babak... Babak Beyrouti. It's been too long I know. Listen, I'm coming to London. I don't know if you're even there, I hope you're OK, I hope you're... busy, but if you are about let's meet up cos you're the only person I know in London – well actually I know somebody else now but I'll tell you about that. OK. Bye.

SCENE THREE - NARRATION:

MALONE (VO) This was a message I received on my answer phone on the 9th of September 2006, from my friend Babak Beyrouti, the Iranian sound recordist and installation artist. At the time I was working at the newly opened flagship Urban Outfitters store in Leeds, so I didn't hear it until I returned to London 3 months later on 12th December 2006.

My name is Dale P Malone, and this is the story of the death of my friend, Babak Beyrouti.

SCENE FOUR:

INSTALLATION PIECE.

THERE ARE MANY OVERLAPPING RECORDINGS: THE DRIPPING OF WATER INTO WATER ON A MASSIVE SCALE, BOOTS TRUDGING THROUGH ICE, YELPING OF SEALS. MALONE'S VOICE CAN OCCASIONALLY BE HEARD GIBBERING AND MURMURING, THOUGH IT IS NOT USED VERY OFTEN.

SCENE FIVE – STUDIO NARRATION

MALONE (VO) I first met Babak in 1999 in Greenland. I am a trained vocal artist and audio actor, and we worked together on the piece “Ridge”.

The preservation of that which is disappearing in the natural world was our driving force in “Ridge”, and from that point on this theme became an obsession for Babak. When it opened in Bilbao, “Ridge” showcased him to the world, and marked the beginning of a brilliant career.

Fame came much quicker for Babak than any of his peers, as did criticism from the art establishment. He did not handle this attention well, and it is my belief that fame only exacerbated the mental health problems he had dealt with since adolescence. On one occasion, when I had travelled out to Mexico to see him, Babak became so uncomfortable during a lull in the conversation that he left the country. This turned out to be the last time I ever saw him in the flesh because until he left the message on my answer phone, Babak had made no effort to contact me for 4 and a half years.

SCENE SIX: AN OLD DESERTED HOTEL.

FX Occasional distant explosions can be heard.

BABAK This is Babak Beyrouti recording.

I am now inside the foyer of the Alhimda. It is larger than I thought and absolutely beautiful. There's nobody here, no guests, no staff...

FX Another loud explosion.

You can hear the Isrealis loud and clear. They have some kind of gunship right out at the edge of the harbour that I can see quite clearly from here, just sat in the water and I'm told they've taken up positions in the hills just to the south...

FX An explosion that is louder than the others.

OK, I am using a single sennheiser stereo straight to DAT, half speed.

FX He records the empty hotel for a while. Eventually, the sound of a cello being played can be discerned.

Can you hear that?

FX He re-positions the microphone to hear the music clearer.

Maybe somebody's here.

It's probably just a record. There can't be anyone left.

FX He picks up his equipment and starts moving.

OK I'm moving up the central staircase now, it seems to be coming from upstairs.

FX The music gets louder.

HE LISTENS.

I think... it sounds like a person playing the instrument. It can't be.

SCENE SEVEN – STUDIO NARRATION

MALONE (VO) Babak flew into London from Amman, the capital city of Jordan, on September the 12th. It was at this point that he became the luckless victim in a case of mistaken identity. Although Babak was at the height of his fame, the Jordanian security services had incorrectly identified him as Bobak Beyroati, known in the intelligence community as an explosives expert with strong links to the Iraqi insurgency. For three weeks he was classified as a Category B security risk, which meant that his phone was tapped, credit cards flagged, and was under constant covert surveillance from police personnel.

The production of tonight's documentary was made much easier by the declassification of over 20 hours of Scotland Yard's surveillance records. The BBC also wishes to thank the Takei gallery in Tokyo. And tonight's program would not have been possible without their collaboration.

Perhaps the biggest puzzle to Babak's friends and fans was what he was doing in London in the first place. It is in the last recording that Babak made before coming to London that we find a clue.

SCENE EIGHT: - ALHIMDA HOTEL

FX The cello gets clearer as he moves along the corridor. It is melancholy, and played beautifully.

BABAK There can't be anyone still here.

Do you hear this?

I think these stairs go onto the roof.

HE CLIMBS UP THE STEPS OUT OF THE HOTEL AND ONTO THE ROOF.

FX The ambience of the world floods into the microphone.
Bombs are still dropping.

It's a girl.

[CALLING] We have to leave! It's not safe!

She can see me. She's just sat there with her cello.

HE CROSSES OVER THE FLAT ROOF,
CLOSER AND CLOSER TO THE CELLO.

ONCE HE REACHES THE CELLO, HE
STOPS.

THE MUSIC CONTINUES UNTIL THE END
OF THE SONG.

[MOVED BY THE MUSIC] Thank you.

SIMONE: You're welcome.

BABAK: I'm Babak.

SIMONE Babak who?

BABAK Babak Beyrouti.

SIMONE My name is Simone.

FX BABAK switches off his tape.

SCENE NINE – STUDIO NARRATION

MALONE (VO) The recording you just heard is the only recording we have of Simone. Her real name was Monica Stackleberg, though Babak was not to find this out for some time.

As you have heard, the pair met in Beirut last summer. Babak was there on a personal project to record the second oldest hotel in the world, the Alhimda, which was bombed into rubble two days later.

Why Simone, or Monica, was there is unclear. Her family have refused to be involved with tonight's program. It seems the most likely explanation is that her playing cello on the roof of a building during artillery bombardment was an early bid for suicide. We can say little else about her, except that she had been, for several years, a huge fan of Babak's work.

The pair met on August 16th, and spent that night together in Beirut before fleeing to Jordan where they stayed for a fortnight. Monica then travelled back to London alone. Arrangements were apparently made for Babak to join her, but the two were never to meet again.

We begin on September 12th, the day of Babak's arrival in London, and seven weeks before his death on Halloween.

SCENE TEN - SURVEILLANCE.

POLICE CAN BE HEARD TALKING.

GURNEY OK he's on the phone. Can we get this?

STAPLE 4 Yeah.

FX We hear a phone ringing clearly, but as if on a crossed line.
It goes to an answer phone.

BABAK Hi Simone, it's me. I've arrived! And my phone works! It's noisy here. Er... call me when you get to Heathrow. I'm stood outside the Starbucks. Do not be alarmed, I will not go inside. See you soon.

GURNEY His English is good. What's he doing now?

STAPLE 4 He's just stood there smiling.

SCENE ELEVEN – ANSWERPHONE MESSAGES:

BABAK (NEW MESSAGE) Hi, er... I guess you're underground or something. Just to say, I'm still here, I'm still waiting for you, but now I'm inside the Starbucks, kind of over towards the disabled toilet, I'm just sat here facing the door with a paper so... call me.

FX Hangs up.

(NEW MESSAGE) OK so I'm in town now I'm near Paddington station in a pub called er.... the slug and..... the slug and the lettuce... you should be able to see me but it's getting quite busy. I'm thinking maybe we passed each other between here and Heathrow, I'm sorry, I probably should have just stayed there. Anyway I'm kind of hungry, so I might not stay here for long but I'll let you know.

(NEW MESSAGE) So, hey, Simone, look, it's cool, we can meet tomorrow. It's probably best that we do, I'm so jetlagged.

SCENE TWELVE: AUDIO DIARY – CANAL SIDE

QUIET, ALTHOUGH THE CONSTANT
RUMBLE OF THE CITY CAN BE HEARD IN
THE BACKGROUND.

BABAK Hi Simone, it's me. I've got my little hidden lapel mic. There's people looking at me right now thinking I'm crazy and I'm talking to myself, but I'm not crazy cos I'm talking to you.

So you didn't come to meet me and its been like... 3 days now, I've filled up your voicemail with messages... so I've just been looking around the places you told me about. I'm walking by the canal in Victoria Park right now. Is this the one you said had fish in it? I don't see any fish. If I were a fish I wouldn't want to be in there...

I'm trying not to be scared. I'm sure you've probably just lost your phone with my number on it.

Anyway. I miss you. And this city is... well, I mean, it's calm here by the canal at least, but there's so many people in London Simone, it's insane. I mean I like it though, I do.

SCENE THIRTEEN: - POLICE SURVEILLANCE RECORDING.

THIS IS A POOR QUALITY RECORDING
OF THE POLICE COMMUNICATIONS AS
THEY TRAIL BABAK.

GURNEY Is he approaching the pond at all?

STAPLE 6 No he's moved away from the pond. He's come down the slope and he's walked into the group of pigeons. They've scattered.

GURNEY The pigeons have scattered?

STAPLE 6 That's right. Now he's just stood there.

GURNEY Doing what?

STAPLE 6 Nothing. Oh, the pigeons are coming back. They're all around him now. He's surrounded by pigeons.

SCENE FOURTEEN: - SITE RECORDING – TRAFALGAR SQUARE

BABAK HAS HIS HIDDEN MIC SWITCHED ON. HE IS POLITELY AND SINCERELY ASKING ONE OF THE 'GUARDIANS' WHO NELSON WAS AND WHY HE HAS THIS COLUMN.

SCENE FIFTEEN :- INT HOTEL ROOM.

THE RECORDER IS SWITCHED ON.

FX There are some beeps as buttons on a mobile phone are pressed near the microphone.

WE HEAR THE PHONE'S TINNY
SPEAKER.

WPC JARVIS Hello, yes this is a message for Mr Babak Beyrouti. Mr Beyrouti, it's WPC Jarvis here from missing persons. Regarding your enquiry about Ms Simone Ruoff, who I understand you said was a student based in London, we have put that name into the system, and we have no record of anyone of that name in education or residency anywhere in the British Isles. So what this means is that unless you can prove that this person has lived in Britain, if you have anything like an address or bank statement, we cannot take this any further, I'm afraid. But if you do have anything or wish to call me to discuss this, please do so. Thankyou.

FX A beep as the mobile phone hangs up.

BABAK (VERY CLOSE TO THE LAPEL MIC) So... You don't exist.

What do you think about that?

A DOOR OPENS AND SOME KIND OF
CART IS WHEELED INTO THE ROOM.

MAID Oh, sorry, room service.

BABAK

It's OK, it's OK.

BABAK'S BODY MOVES AS HE GETS OFF
THE BED AND THE RECORDER IS
CLUMSILY SWITCHED OFF.

SCENE SIXTEEN: SURVEILLANCE – LONDON EYE

SUPERINTENDENT GURNEY AND HIS
DEPUTY ARE SPEAKING TO THEIR
AGENT IN THE FIELD, STAPLE 6.

GURNEY What... oh not again. Why do they keep letting him on?

Staple 7 It's OK, I'm with him.

VOICE (HEARD THROUGH STAPLE 7'S MIC) Welcome on board
the London Eye. Please move to the rear of the pod to allow
other passengers to enter.

GURNEY Is he examining the construction of the cabin at all?

STAPLE 7 No.

GURNEY Is he psyching himself up for something?

STAPLE 7 No.

GURNEY Well this is his fifth time round he's doing something isn't he.

STAPLE 7 He's looking out the window.

GURNEY At what?

STAPLE 7 London.

GURNEY Which bits?

STAPLE 7 All of it.

SCENE SEVENTEEN: AUDIO DIARY - A QUIET, SMALL SPACE.

BABAK So... the thing is Simone, there are no recordings of you. Do you say that, recordings? Records. There are no records for you. Which, for the police, means you don't exist.

So since you don't exist I should probably turn around and go back to the desert. But I can't because you've infected me. I met you, and I went insane, and now I'm stuck with it.

Which is why I have rented a flat, which is where you can hear me from now. The guy told me he is subletting, which is apparently illegal but suits me perfectly. And well... it's not the best but it feels so good just to lock the door and sit in the middle of the room.

And this is your neighbourhood right? Bethnal Green. This might even be your block. I might see you in the lift tomorrow. I might be looking at you right now. I can see most of the city from this window.

I'm waving at you now.

Wave back to me.

You see? You made me insane. I'm waving in the dark to all of London from my new flat on the 11th floor, because of you.

SCENE EIGHTEEN: SITE RECORDING

PIGEONS COOING EN MASSE IN
TRAFalGAR SQUARE.

SCENE NINETEEN: AUDIO DIARY – DULWICH ROAD

BABAK WALKS BRISKLY ALONG THE
ROAD, INVIGORATED, HAPPY,
ENTHUSIASTIC.

BABAK I am an idiot. Officially, I am an idiot. I forget that it is 2006. You have to remember, Simone, that I have been living in the desert for six months. My brain is full of sand .

So I've been here nearly 2 weeks, I've walked all over London, I've waited and looked in cafes and record shops and tube stations, I got so stressed out about finding you that I can't even go to the toilet properly, which you don't need to know but my point is that this afternoon I thought of Googling Simone Ruoff.

So in 5.2 seconds I found out that Simone Ruoff is performing this evening and every night this week at the Dulwich Conservatoire with Xavier somebody. So that is why I'm in a new suit holding a large bunch of flowers and... I'm about to see you play. Again. So the next time I talk to you, I'll actually be talking to you.

SCENE TWENTY: AUDIO DIARY - BUSTLING AUDITORIUM.

BABAK OK, I couldn't wait. This place is amazing! I really shouldn't have recording equipment in here but I think you will forgive me. Ah! The lights are going down.

THE AUDIENCE HUSHES. AN EXPECTANT SILENCE IN WHICH WE CAN JUST HEAR BABAK'S HEART THUMPING. TWO PAIRS OF FEET WALK OUT ONTO THE WOODEN STAGE.

A CELLO AND A VIOLIN START TO PLAY.

BABAK'S BREATHING GETS HEAVIER, PANICKED. HE GETS UP OUT OF HIS SEAT AND WE HEAR THE PEOPLE AROUND HIM GETTING ANGRY. HE IS MOVING OUT OF THE AUDITORIUM AS FAST AS HE CAN. HE STARTS TO RUN.

PLAYING OVER THE TOP OF THIS NOW COMES THE RECORD OF THE POLICE SURVEILLANCE.

STAPLE 7 Shit. He's bolted.

GURNEY Stay with him.

STAPLE 7 He's leaving the building. Front exit.

GURNEY Stay with him.

STAPLE 7 (RUNNING) He's running

GURNEY All points stand by.

THE POLICE DESCRIPTIONS OF BABA'S
ACTIONS CORRESPOND EXACTLY TO
WHAT WE CAN HEAR ON HIS HIDDEN
MIC.

HE OPENS THE DOOR OF THE FOYER
AND STAGGERS OUT ONTO THE
STREET.

OK something's happening this is it

DEPUTY What's he doing?

GURNEY Staple 7 do you have a clear shot?

STAPLE 7 Crystal clear. Do I take it?

DEPUTY What's he doing?

FX Thrashing sounds and choked breathing from Babak.

GURNEY Stand by.

DEPUTY What's in the flowers?

STAPLE 7 I have a clear shot.

GURNEY Stand by. What's he doing?

STAPLE 7 He is attacking the lamppost with the flowers. The flowers...
he's kicking them across the street. He's lost it

GURNEY Stand down.

STAPLE 7 He's crying.

DEPUTY Crying?

STAPLE 7 Yes. He's weeping in the middle of the road. Do I take him out?

GURNEY Stand down.

BABAK RETCHES.

STAPLE 7 Whoah. He's vomiting. Yep.

GURNEY What is wrong with this bloke?

DEPUTY Is this our man?

GURNEY Yes.

BABAK CONTINUES TO VOMIT.

Jesus.

STAPLE 7 He's moving.

GURNEY Stay with him.

SCENE TWENTY-ONE: AUDIO DIARY – BABAK’S FLAT

BABAK Hi Simone. It's Monday evening. I'm at home, in my new flat on the 11th floor.

So for two days I've been thinking if the woman I saw is Simone Ruoff, the successful cellist, then who the hell are you?

And I've realised that this explains everything. Why you didn't meet me, why I can't get you on the phone, why you don't exist.

Why did you feel you had to lie to me? Because you knew my work? Because I'm famous? Cos you felt you weren't good enough. That's the only reason I can think of. Because I'm 'somebody', and you think you're 'nobody', which is bullshit. I travelled all the way here for *you*. I hate this city.

I don't know what you're scared of... probably that I'll be disappointed that you're not The Simone Ruoff, who I've never heard of anyway, but..... God, Simone, I don't give a shit what you are, if you're a success or not.

We're going to be laughing about this, and you're going to be embarrassed, and our friends won't believe us when we tell them, but it won't matter, and I'll forgive you. I forgive you now. I just think you're an idiot. Goodnight idiot.

SCENE TWENTY-TWO: AUDIO DIARY – INT/EXT BUS

BABAK IS RECORDING SOMEONE'S CONVERSATION. SUDDENLY WE HEAR HIM BANGING ON THE WINDOW.

BABAK Hey! Hey!

HE GETS UP AND PRESSES THE BELL CONTINUOUSLY. THE DOORS OPEN AND HE RUNS DOWN THE BUSY ROAD SHOUTING.

Simone! Simone its me!

HE STOPS RUNNING.

Simone.....

WOMAN (starts shouting at him in Bosnian.)

BABAK Sorry I thought....

I thought you were somebody else.

SCENE TWENTY THREE – VICTORIA STATION

BABAK IS SAT ON A BENCH

FX Incoherent voices echo from a tannoy system.

BABAK This is Babak Beyrouti recording.

Victoria station, 2:30 pm, Wednesday.

Cheese and pickle baguette eaten 45 minutes ago.

HE REDIRECTS THE MICROPHONE TO
HIS STOMACH. IT GROANS, SPASMS AND
SHUDDERS IN AN UNHEALTHY MANNER.

SCENE TWENTY FOUR: SURVEILLANCE RECORDING

STAPLE 6 It's a microphone.

GURNEY Can you confirm that he is holding a microphone?

STAPLE 6 Yeah I'm looking at it.

GURNEY He's.... what's he doing?

STAPLE 6 He's placing it to his stomach.

GURNEY He is resting the microphone on his stomach, is that confirmed?

STAPLE 6 No he is recording his own stomach.

GURNEY Staple 6 can you confirm that he is recording his own stomach?

STAPLE 6 That is confirmed.

SCENE TWENTY FIVE: NARRATION

MALONE (VO) The surveillance recording that you just heard is dated Wednesday October 4th, and was the last made of Babak by Superintendent Gurney's unit. Later that day they discovered that the man they thought they were following, Bobak Beyroati, was arrested in Jakarta, having just blown up an American owned abattoir. This marked the end of Scotland Yard's surveillance, and from here on in we must rely almost exclusively on Babak's own recordings.

SCENE TWENTY SEVEN: - OUTSIDE AT NIGHT. IT IS WINDY.

EVERYTHING IS RECORDED EXTREMELY
CLEARLY AND IN STEREO.

BABAK This is Babak Beyrouti recording.

HE MOVES PAST A VARIETY OF
MICROPHONES, CLICKING HIS FINGERS
INTO THEM.

OK. I am on the roof of my tower block in East London. It is 3 a.m. Light wind coming from the city.

I am using a square grid of 4 Sennheiser 370, each mounted 1.4m from the floor and pointed directly at subject at a distance of 3m.

Subject is selection of furniture that was in my flat placed on top of each other in a pile. Bed at bottom, wardrobe, sofa, etc, carpet and curtains on top. Total height is about 2m.

5 minutes ago, 10 litres of 4 star unleaded petrol was poured over the subject.

Recording to virgin DAT at half speed via SQN 4S.

OK, let's hear how this sounds.

FX Sound of match being struck. Whoosh of flames. Crackle of burning furniture.

It sounds magnificent.

SCENE TWENTY EIGHT: AUDIO DIARY – BABAK’S FLAT

BABAK IS TESTING OUT THE ACOUSTICS
IN HIS BARREN FLAT.

BABAK Bom! Bom – bom - bom!

That sounds better huh?

No furniture, no carpet, I cleaned the walls, I bleached the floor, I boiled all the knives and forks. Knives and forks!

Listen to that echo. So clean.

I've sealed the entire flat now, myself. I got some Chemi-Pro linoleum that is oil chemical and heat resistant. 2 inches thick of sealant on all corners and rails, there's no way for mice to get in now.

I like this much better. Now I can look out on the city beneath but I'm safe and clean up here. I should just get a telescope and stay up here to find you.

FX Loud metal music booms out suddenly, filtered through the ceiling.

Oh, that's my neighbour upstairs. He's Italian, I think. He's a musician.

Is this loud? It is loud isn't it. He's OK though. Normally I don't hear him in the daytime.

FX In the next door flat, a dog starts barking.

That's next door.

LILLY (ALSO NEXT DOOR) Shut up! Shut up!

BABAK She's talking to her dog, not the music. She's so funny.

FX The music, dog and neighbour continue to drone, bark and scream.

SCENE THIRTY ONE: AUDIO DIARY. EXT. – GREENWICH PARK

BABAK Hi Simone. I'm on the hill in Greenwich Park. It's beautiful here. All the city looks so far away.

I got a letter this morning, so I've just been to the police station in Deptford. It's because I told them about your tattoos. They had some pictures for me to look at. Pictures of parts of you.

They didn't have any from the neck up, Simone. They told me that your name was Monica Stackleberg, and that on September the 12th you took off all your clothes and you jumped off a building holding your cello.

Which was the day that I arrived.

So you did exist out there somewhere.

I'm going to keep calling you Simone, if you don't mind. And I'm going to keep talking to you. You're the only person I know in London.

SCENE THIRTY TWO: SITE RECORDING - PUB

FX Last orders. Drunk people on the streets.

SCENE THIRTY THREE: AUDIO DIARY. - BLACKHEATH

BABAK (DRUNK) Why did you bring me here? Why? You could have told me not to come. I would never have come here. This city is dogshit and coffee.... And bullshit. And rat shit and human shit everywhere.

But I don't care. I'll make it work. I do things. People know me. You die and who gives a shit? Me, I'm the only one. Cos you're nobody and I'm somebody. Well that's right. I am somebody. You bring me to shit and I get roses. This project I'm working on now in London, this is the one, this is going to change things for everyone. There's gonna be streets named after me. No one has ever made a piece of audio art about pigeons before. Not like I'm doing.

The pigeons... they know. They see everything in this city... they're scavengers, like everyone else here, crawling over the corpse to get a little bit. They're gonna be here when this city is dust.

So get lost Simone. Get lost Monica. I don't need you anymore. I got pigeons.

RUDEBOY 1 (CLOSE BY) You what mate?

BABAK What? No.

RUDEBOY 1 Say what bruv?

BABAK Nothing.

RUDEBOY 2 Oi mate it that your camera?

BABAK No

RUDEBOY 1 Give me the camera bruv

BABAK It's not a camera

RUDEBOY 2 Give him the camera bruv

BABAK Take my watch.

RUDEBOY 1 I don't want your watch. I ain't picking your watch off the floor. Gimme that.

RUDEBOY 2 What is it?

RUDEBOY 1 It's a microphone! What you doing with this?

BABAK IS HIT BY ONE OF THEM AND FALLS DOWN.

Give me your whatever it is.

BABAK No.

A SCUFFLE, RIGHT UP AGAINST THE MIC. THERE ARE PUNCHES AND KICKS. BABAK SCREAMS IN PAIN, THEN ONE OF HIS ATTACKERS DOES. RUNNING FOOTSTEPS. BABAK STILL HAS THE RECORDER AND IS FLEEING HIS ATTACKERS, TERRIFIED.

HE STOPS RUNNING SUDDENLY, STILL, HIDING, BREATHING HEAVILY.

THE SUBURBAN RUDEBOYS APPROACH
AND STOP.

RUDEBOY 1 Where is he?

RUDEBOY 2 He's down there.

RUDEBOY 1 Where?

RUDEBOY 2 Down there somewhere.

BOTH (DEP) Big man! Oi!

(DEP) Microphone man!

THEY ARE FAR AWAY.

HE TURNS THE RECORDER OFF.

SCENE THIRTY FOUR: AUDIO DIARY – BABAK’S FLAT

BABAK I just listened again to the last tape I made you, before I got aggressed. I’m sorry for those things I said about you. You should see me now. I haven’t been out of the house since then. I tried to get some milk but I didn’t like it. Its been four days and I’ve still got a big black eye... well kind of green and purple now, and inside my mouth is all swollen where my teeth went into my lip.

There’s worse though. It’s embarrassing. They kicked me in the stomach. I think it dislodged something. I don’t know what it did. It makes me bleed out, down there, into the toilet. It hasn’t stopped. And when I go to the bathroom the pain is too much. It’s stupid, it will probably get better.

SCENE THIRTY FIVE: THE STAIRWELL OF BABAK'S FLAT, AS
HEARD THROUGH HIS FRONT DOOR.

WHEN THE TAPE IS SWITCHED ON, THE ARGUMENT BETWEEN THE ITALIAN HEAVY METAL FAN AND LILLY NEXT DOOR IS ALREADY IN FULL FLOW. THE DOG IS BARKING IN THE FLAT NEXT DOOR AND CAN BE HEARD SCRATCHING AT THE DOOR

ITALIAN Why you don't chain him up? Every time he attack me! Why don't you close your door

LILLY That's your problem innit

ITALIAN He attack me! Why you don't keep your bloody door closed?

LILLY Why don't you turn your music down eh? How about that? Your not even directly above me and I can't sleep cos of it. God knows what he has to listen to.

ITALIAN My music is not too loud. You chain your stupid dog OK?

THE DOG'S BARKING IS LOUDER. IT HAS GOT OUT OF THE FLAT AND GONE FOR THE ITALIAN.

LILLY Princess!

ITALIAN Chain your dog!

LILLY Princess! Get in here!

ITALIAN You crazy? Stop the dog!

LILLY Princess!

ITALIAN I kick him. I kick him!

LILLY DRAGS PRINCESS BACK INTO HER
FLAT AND SHUTS HER IN.

LILLY (TO PRINCESS) Shut up! Shut up!

ITALIAN Next time your dog bites me, I kill him, OK?

LILLY You touch her and I'll gut you, you foreign junky bastard. I
mean it. One finger on her!

ITALIAN [cusses her out in Italian]

LILLY Whatever! Whatever junky!

SHE GOES BACK INSIDE HER FLAT AND
SLAMS THE DOOR.

FX Princess starts barking again.

Shut up! Princess, shut it!

FX Deafening heavy metal music booms through the ceiling.

SCENE THIRTY SIX: PHONECALL – BABAK’S FLAT

BABAK IS TALKING TO A CALL CENTRE
OPERATIVE IN INDIA.

OPERATIVE How may I help you?

BABAK Yes hello. I was wondering... sorry, who am I speaking to?

OPERATIVE Hello sir my name is Vikram what number are you looking for?

BABAK Are you... where are you based?

OPERATIVE This call centre is based in Mumbai sir.

BABAK Mumbai, OK... what's the weather like there today?

OPERATIVE I'm sorry unless you are requesting a number I cannot help you.

BABAK I've been to Mumbai. I recorded the delta before it was flooded for the dam. 18 hours of audio.

I could send you the mp3 if you want. What's your e mail address.

OPERATIVE These calls are recorded for quality control. I have to hang up now.

BABAK Hold on please. I need a doctor in the Hackney area.

OPERATIVE OK. Would you like to be put straight through?

BABAK Yes please.

SCENE THIRTY SEVEN: INTERIOR OF HOSPITAL.

BABAK WHISPERS AS IF TRYING TO
AVOID BEING OVERHEARD. HE SLURS A
LITTLE BECAUSE HE HAS BEEN
SEDATED.

BABAK Simone, I find myself in a hospital robe lying face down on a table. I am watching the wheels go round in my recorder. I cannot say for how long I have been in this position. They've given me drugs of some kind. Simone, this place is disgusting. Let me say that first of all. I am never coming back here.

I cannot remember your face. Not one bit of it. I remember your arse perfectly though. I can close my eyes and see your arse right now Simone. I have seen it all over London walking away from me. Your arse is beautiful. Your arse is a crime. You don't even know it. It's young and fearless. It plays basketball. It wears jeans like they're supposed to be worn. It runs marathons and goes on T4 Popworld.

My arse is different. My arse is in rebellion. My arse makes me flush toilets 3 times till there's no red left in the bowl. My arse makes me sit in doctor's waiting rooms reading horoscopes from August 2004. My arse requires urgent attention. My arse allows smiling African nurses to pump me full of anesthetic before junior doctors insert special cameras into it.

SCENE FORTY: INSIDE BABAK'S FLAT. LATER THAT DAY

BABAK Back at home now. Since I got back here I've had 3 baths.

I'm never going back there again. What a shit-hole. It's a scandal. I could hear the disease throbbing in the walls.

But it wasn't all bad. I made a new friend today. I'm looking at a picture of her right now. The filthy doctor gave it to me in his filthy room. He said 'All of this is your intestine. This part here is your bladder. Here is your colon. And this part here, this bean sized patch, this is the cancerous tumour growing on it'.

He's right, she is shaped like a bean. That's how she's grown in me. I made her, but she's not made of me. I keep her alive while she kills me. I gave her a name. She's called Simone.

SCENE FORTY ONE: BABAK'S FLAT [AND EXT MIC]

FX Lots of pigeons on the balcony of Babak's flat.

BABAK Testing. Testing.

This is Babak Beyrouti recording. I am here at my primary site, which is the balcony of my flat in East London.

OK. It's mostly set up now. I've got them now, they live here on the balcony. There's about 40 that sleep here at night in about 3 square metres. I've mounted a pair of 310s on a frame above them and they seem to be working fine.

HE LISTENS.

Yep.

I've put a special chute in so that i can feed them bread and biscuits.

This means I can now feed the birds and monitor my external equipment in a perfect seal, which is lucky cos the crap from the pigeons is now 3 inches deep on the floor. I have a beautiful cross section of it through the glass which I am updating daily on my camera.

So finally, everything is perfect for continuous recording.

FX Heavy metal music kicks in.

FX The dog barks.

SCENE FORTY TWO: INT BABAK'S FLAT.

FX A computer whirs next to him and we can hear him operating a mouse.

BABAK (DRUNK) Simone... simone-y what do you want to eat?
Frozen peas? Come on... I feed you frozen peas for 89p.

Proceed directly to check out? No, we do not.

Quattro Formaggi. You like pizza Simone?

Quattro.... Quattro.... Quattro.... Quattro...

FX Tape ends.

SCENE FORTY THREE: SITE RECORDING. EXT.

THE SOUND OF PIGEONS, BUT
SOMETHING IS DIFFERENT. THIS
LOCATION IS MORE EXPOSED THAN THE
BALCONY. THE PIGEONS TOO SOUND
DIFFERENT; LESS COOING AND MORE
SCRATCHING AND SCREECHING.

BABAK (FROM INSIDE THE FLAT) Yes... yes... so there you can hear them. I can't really see that well from here but I would say there are about 12 of them at the moment.

OK, this is something special, so I am recording two tracks at the same time so I don't get my stupid voice all over the master.... Wow another lot have just arrived.

Any way.... Where to begin? Sorry, Simone, I know it seems I haven't been speaking to you, but I have. I know there's been nothing for a week now, but in fact I've been speaking to you everyday. There's been a lot happening.

But then about half an hour ago... for a very specific reason, I had to clean all of my flat and I very stupidly kicked a bottle of bleach over everything I recorded since last Wednesday, 3 separate DATs, and destroyed the whole lot, which is extremely annoying but let me think what you've missed....

It was Monday when I first started thinking, I suppose, because the problem I was having was: what is the point of buying all these books and instruments if I have nothing to practice on? And then on Tuesday morning Princess was out again in the hallway, sniffing around under my door and it all became very obvious. All I had to do to prepare was read up for a few days and add a steak to the tescos order, which brings us to this morning.

It was easy to get her in, I don't think she'd been fed for days. The only hard part was getting her to eat on the bathroom scales so that I could calculate how much bixinocaine to give her, but I did OK. I guess she'd seen needles before round here, she didn't care and she went asleep very quickly.

FX There are more pigeons now and their noises are becoming more frantic.

The kitchen table was perfect, really, it's extremely strong and easy to clean. I really wish I hadn't blanked that tape because it would be very useful to have a log of the surgery. It was a total success. The whole thing took 18 minutes. Went in through the abdomen, around the intestines and sex organs and found the colon. It's actually incredibly easy, there was very little bleeding. I took four centimetres of her colon without any trouble.... The hard part was re-attaching the ends but that went OK eventually.

Closing her up was much more difficult than going in, but very worthwhile because my stitching definitely improved as I went along. And then... what next?

(Wow there's at least 50 now)

Yes so then she woke up half an hour later, very sleepy, obviously in pain but too druggy to make a sound. She wandered about the apartment a bit, and she kept falling over until she just sat down and rested in the corner. It was all pretty much done then, so that's when I gave her the second shot and she was dead very quickly.

But then that gave another problem which was how to get rid of her. And it meant leaving the flat which I have to tell you felt really, *really* weird, but I dumped her body out by the garages just outside. Then of course I came back and had to bleach the entire apartment which is when I lost the tapes.

Oh yes of course also I put a radio mic just tucked in between her teeth and the rest you can hear now. The pigeons have been on her for about 45 minutes I suppose. I don't think anyone will find her till tomorrow morning, and by then any signs of any of the surgery should be totally gone.

So the only question now is how long have we got until one of these birds eats my radio mic?

HE LISTENS.

OK shit. Now some crows have come.

FX There is louder powerful squawking from the crows. The mic is scratched about.

I think this is all we'll get.

FX The radio mic goes dead.

Yep. OK. So. Total success.

SCENE FORTY FOUR: INT BABAK'S FLAT.

FX The tape is turned on and instantly we hear banging at the door.

BABAK (WHISPERING) Oh shit.

LILLY Open the door!

Open the door now! I know you're in there!

BABAK Hold on please!

FX More banging.

BABAK OPENS THE DOOR.

LILLY Was it you? Did you do it?

BABAK No. Do what?

LILLY Did you touch her? Did you touch my dog?

BABAK No.

LILLY I'll kill you. I'll fucking kill you if you touched her you foreign bastard

BABAK I don't know what you're talking about

LILLY One thing! One little thing that says it was you, you're a dead man.

Where's the other one?

BABAK What?

LILLY The Italian. The junky. Where's he gone?

BABAK I don't know

LILLY You tell him I'm watching him too. One thing. Wankers.

SHE GOES. BABAK SHUTS THE DOOR.

BABAK Oh.

SCENE FORTY FIVE: INT BABA'S FLAT, AUDIO DIARY.

FX Loud knocking at the door.

POLICE Hello? Hello it's the police can you open the door please?

WE HEAR BABA DRAWING CURTAINS
AND HURRIEDLY PACKING THINGS
AWAY.

Open the door sir it's the police.

BABA One minute please!

FX The tape is switched off.

SCENE FORTY SIX: INT BABAK'S FLAT

BABAK They're gone. They're all gone. I'm watching them drive away.

Simone. My God.

Gabrielli is in hospital. Gabrielli is the musician upstairs. It seems that the lady next door found out about a piece of microphone in Princess' mouth. And she heard from his music that he was back, so she went up to see him, and apparently, say the police, he was rehearsing with his band and he answered the door holding a microphone. Which was very unlucky for him, because as far as I could tell, he was a bassist.

And so she saw that, and she's been drunk for 2 days and she had a knife with her already from the kitchen, and she stabbed him on the doorstep. Right into his chest.

So I don't know how he is... he's with the doctors, it's very serious, and she is now in prison.

No princess, no Gabrielli, no crazy lady, and everything is set up for me here. Perfect.

SCENE FORTY SEVEN: SITE RECORDING. EXT.

PIGEONS ON THE BALCONY. THE ONLY
OTHER NOISE IS THE LOW RUMBLE OF
THE CITY.

SCENE FORTY EIGHT: BABAK'S FLAT

BABAK This is Babak Beyrouti recording at 2:16 p.m. on Tuesday the 31st October 2006.

The set up is as follows. I have 4 180 degree Sony field mics suspended from the ceiling. Each one corresponds exactly to a corner of the table I am lying on and is exactly 1 metre above it. I also have a standard head clip mic to record my commentary.

This is going straight to DAT without a mixer since I will require both my hands for the operation.

You may occasionally hear this sound.

FX turning of a page.

That is simply the medical textbook which I have on a stand next to me for reference during the procedure in the very unlikely event that something goes wrong.

FX slapping of flesh

The entire midsection of my body is now completely numb and has been for 10 minutes. It's a very strange sensation.

To my left I have a tray of sterilised surgical instruments. I start with a basic frontal incision along the abdomen using the seven inch scalpel.

FX A wet tearing sound.

That looks good. OK. It's so strange I can't feel anything.

I'm looking into the hole I have just made and on one side there is muscle and a lot of fatty tissue. Towards the other side is this kind of grey tubing, and I think this thing is the liver. It's very large if it is

OK, so all I have to do is find away through the lower intestine.

Yes, this is good, yes...

Oh... oh dear, it's difficult doing this in the mirror. I must be more careful

This thing.... I don't know what this is.... It's kind of.... stringy.....er....

FX He flips through pages.

Maybe it's a.... no. It may be the spleen. No, hang on. I've lost my page.

I'm not exactly sure where I am at the moment. Hang on. OK. I am definitely holding the large intestine now. That's a fact..... it's so tightly packed in. So you must be somewhere behind this Simone. Where are you hiding?

Its difficult on this angle.

FX He moves about on the table.

Whoah.

I can move forward to get a better view in the mirror but that makes my bladder flop out of the incision onto my belly. OK I have to re-think this.

FX He flips through the book.

OK I'm bleeding now. Not too heavily. Ah, the incision is bleeding too now. Oh god, ok, I don't have time for this. I need gauze. OK. That should hold it.

The problem I'm having Simone is not so much finding you as avoiding everything else. In an ideal world I would be able to dump it out and put it back in later.... In fact I can probably do that with the lower intestine..... OK hear goes, this takes both hands

HE GRUNTS WITH EFFORT.

God its really very mucousy and hard to keep still. OK, so I have unpacked about 2m of intestine now onto the table.... This should give me room to manoeuvre.

FX Slurping sounds.

It's no good. this is not working. More blood. Maybe... maybe this was not the right way. Lets see.

FX He flips anxiously through the pages.

There's really nothing in this book that's very useful to me right now. The index has been torn out as well which is very annoying.... The bleeding is definitely getting heavier now. OK.

I'm now going to try some thing else, Simone, I'm going to just have to feel for you without being able to actually see what I'm doing. Here goes, if I just slide my arm in

FX A wet plunging sound.

HE STARTS LAUGHING.

I wish you could see this, Simone. I can see myself in the mirror. I'm hunched over and my right arm is now tucked inside my belly up to the elbow. I look a like a human apostrophe.

OK. I feel a bit light headed.

I can feel.... I think this is my colon.... It's rubbery... ah... no. I'm lost now. Ah hang on..... no. no I've been here before. It's very complicated, the human body, internally. Very complicated. Much more complicated than a dog.

This is not working either.

FX Slurping.

I've just removed my arm.... There's bits stuck to it, I don't know what they are. I'll just put them to one side.

Where are you Simone?

FX drips onto lino.

I'm running out of time now. There's a strange prickly feeling which I think is the anaesthetic wearing off.... It could just be the blood loss. I hope it's not the anaesthetic.

Or the blood loss. There's been a lot. It's spilling off the table now onto the floor.

Oh shit. I really haven't thought this through.

I'm just going to have to cut a path through and re-attach everything later. Here goes.

FX Sawing and fibrous tearing sounds

Oh God, this was a huge a mistake.

I really messed up here.

I'm really not a surgeon. There's a chance here that I might die.

Oh not here. Oh my God.

Simone where are you? Where are you?

I know you're here somewhere.

I'm just pulling things out now. There can't be much more than this. I cannot believe what I am doing.

There! There you are Simone.

I'm looking at you right now. I can fit you between my finger and thumb. So small. I need the scissors.

FX Precise cutting.

There! I've got you. I'm holding you in my hand.

Simone. You're beautiful.

FX

thumps as his body falls back on the table

I feel... thin

Thin.

It's too late.

Simone.

Tell them about me Simone. Tell them I was....

CHOKING AND GURGLING SOUNDS
FROM HIS MOUTH, THEN SILENCE,
APART FROM THE DRIPS.

**SCENE FORTY NINE: CHEAP TAPE RECORDING - LARGE TILED
ROOM.**

CORONER Subject is a well developed, well nourished. 5' 10", 170 lb, man whose appearance is consistent with the given age and origin of 33 year old Iranian.

FADES UNDER THE NARRATION

The scalp hair is wavy, black and 3 to 4inches or less. There is slight moustache and beard stubble. The irides are dark brown and the conjunctivae are free of patachiae, jaundice or hemorrhage. The oral cavity has natural teeth in good condition. There are no injuries to the buccal mucosa, gingivae or franulae. The genitalia are of a normal, circumcised, adult man.

The chest is not increased in the anteroposterior dimension but has heavy, dried blood over the xiphoid and lower sternal regions. The breasts are masculine and have no palpable masses or nipple discharge. The entire body shows advanced decomposition with skin discolouration, slippage and numerous mature maggots. The facial characteristics are severely distorted, as is soft-tissue integrity of extremities and torso. This latter is characterized by a caseous type pasty liquefactive appearance of virtually all soft tissue and organs.

SCENE FIFTY: - STUDIO NARRATION

MALONE (VO) Babak's body was found seven weeks later on December the 19th.

As the news of his death broke over Christmas, I scoured the international media to see how the world had remembered him.

The European obituaries dwelled on his status as a 'popular' artist, a label which he had hated. Here in Britain attention focussed on the failure of the social and security services to prevent this tragedy. Very little discussion was made of his work, though the Tate Modern quickly programmed a complete retrospective, which opens this July.

Will Self, speaking on Newsnight, sparked outrage and flood of complaints when he said of Babak "he was interesting years ago but all he's done recently is disappear into his own arse". Self later defended his comment by claiming that he was unfamiliar with Babak's cause of death.

In Japan there was huge outpouring of national grief, and, tragically, at least two copycat suicides. In Iran he became the first artist to be given a state funeral.

What you are listening to now is the last recording ever made of Babak - his post mortem, conducted at the request of Bow coroner's office. My name is Dale P Malone. Thank you for listening.

CREDITS.