

ROB DE GRAAF

# *DE AVOND*

*(ENGLISH SPOKEN)*



0.

I see a red door and I want it painted black  
No colors anymore I want them to turn black

I see the girls walk by dressed in their summer clothes  
I have to turn my head until my darkness goes

I see a line of cars and they're all painted black  
With flowers and my love both never to come back

I see people turn their heads and quickly look away  
Like a newborn baby it just happens every day

I look inside myself and see my heart is black  
I see my red door, I must have it painted black

Maybe then I'll fade away and not have to face the facts

It's not easy facin' up when your whole world is black

No more will my green sea go turn a deeper blue

I could not foresee this thing happening to you

If I look hard enough into the settin' sun

My love will laugh with me before the mornin' comes

I see a red door and I want it painted black

No colors anymore I want them to turn black

I see the girls walk by dressed in their summer clothes

I have to turn my head until my darkness goes

I wanna see your face, painted black

Black as night, black as coal

I wanna see the sun blotted out from the sky

I wanna see it painted, painted, painted, painted black\*

1.

Oidipous says

Love your mother

Kill your father

Oidipous says

We never are who we pretend to be

Oidipous says

Que será será

I did it my way

Oidipous says

I've been looking for some innocence

My search was in vain

I've been working for some change

But the status quo remains

Oidipous says

Do you remember the fields and the woods and the skies of  
our youth?

We won't find them anymore

Our senses are fading away

Today we can no longer touch

We can no longer smell

We don't have eyes to see

We cannot taste and we cannot feel

Like we did in those far-away days, when we were part of  
life

Today, our blood is like water

Our senses are dumb

Oidipous says

To be alive is to be slowly dying

Oidipous says

We can't help it

We plead 'not guilty', Your Honour

Everything has gone wrong – but it just happened to us

We are not the actors in this play

We are not the masters of our own life

We are like shreds of torn paper

Blown by the wind in an empty street on a grey winter's  
day

Oidipous says

I've seen it all

I've seen it and it hurt my eyes

Now these eyes can have rest

Today, all is the blackest of black when I open them

Oidipous says

'Who am I?'

The worst of all questions

Who am I?

I am an image that someone has made up

I am nothing but a thought

Soon it will be forgotten

I am a phrase that has begun but was never completed

I am but a shadow

Tomorrow it will be as if I never existed

Oidipous says

I had a mother

She's dead

I had a father

He was murdered

I can't help it

I wanted love

The love I found was poisoned

Once I had power

Now I'm helpless

Oidipous says

I live with walls

Walls in my head

Walls where my eyesight used to be

Walls around me

Four walls, I know that

And of these walls, the fourth wall is to conquer

I know: only the exceptionally strong can break through the

fourth wall – into the real world, the free world

I'm Oidipous – I'm not that strong

Oidipous says

The sun doesn't know

The mountains don't care  
The flowering fields can't understand  
The lake won't remember  
Who this man is  
The man with the slow, heavy feet  
The man with a stone instead of a heart

Oidipous says  
We must smile while we're lying  
We must laugh when we kill  
We must forget the promises we made  
We must destroy the portrait of our loved ones

Oidipous says  
We should forget our ambitions  
We should forget the well-made words  
We should refrain from all optimism  
Refrain from great expectations  
We should just wait for the sun to set  
Every night is a promise  
The promise of death  
Death will be our final consolation

Oidipous says

I was a boy

I cut my skin

Blue and red and green ink filled the wound

I wanted to carry a sign forever

I was to be the punk with the snake tattoo

Oidipous says

There's a holy place where white smoke comes from the  
depth of the earth

I go there and I let that smoke get into my lungs, into my  
brain

Now I become clear-sighted

Now the mysteries of the world are no longer a secret for  
me

My mind is liberated

Come on, baby, light my fire

Oidipous says

Once they took care of me

Soft were their voices and delicate their movements

They caressed me, in a quiet white room

They dressed me in white cotton  
They gave me warm white milk to drink  
They put me to sleep in a small white bed – it was like a  
haven  
They delicately touched me with their white-gloved fingers  
They took me outside the house  
To watch the white snow that was falling  
They laughed at me and I could see their white teeth  
That's what happened before this man came  
The man of fear  
The old man who said: 'Let's paint it all black'

Oidipous says  
To love means to betray  
To act means to neglect  
To live means to destroy  
To do just anything means to do it all wrong

Oidipous says  
I hear you, but I don't see you  
I listen to your voice, but I won't understand the words

I know you exist, but I'm not going to remember your  
name

Oidipous says

I wish it were different

I wish I were The Young Prince

I wish I could be swift and fast

Forever Young

California Dreamin'

I do hope there exists a California, somewhere on this pla-  
net

Oidipous says

My body aches

It must be taken care of by another body

An unknown body that will give it new strength

A body that afterwards I will despise and forget

Oidipous says

We won't survive

But why should we care?

We won't survive  
Our eyes won't be hurt anymore  
Our ears will no longer be tortured  
Our voices won't destroy the silence  
We won't survive  
That's why we smile

2.

This is the summer

The summer of '81

We don't have much of a past

And we are quite sure that there won't be much of a future

This is the summer of '81

The world is divided

Divided between us and the old people

Between those who move and those who stand still

Divided between the rich white and the poor black

Divided by a rusty curtain that separates two dying systems

This is the summer of '81

On all sorts of islands and in all sorts of deserts

Soldiers and politicians try out their new bombs

This world is preparing its own destruction

This is the summer of '81

In hot, far-away countries

Men in dirty uniforms stab villagers to death  
Just because they dare to ask for some freedom

This is the summer of '81  
We, being young white men, we'll just let it happen  
We go for the easy life  
There's nothing we can do  
We are like Buddhists  
We just sit and watch the raindrops fall

This is the summer of '81  
I am sitting in my room, doing nothing  
There is a mirror and I closely watch my own face  
I know I should go out, to where the sun is  
Where there are people who could be my friends  
But somehow, I prefer to be here, just by myself  
Then I hear the voice of my mother  
She's at work in the kitchen, I suppose  
I listen to the song she is singing  
She knows it from long ago  
It's about a lover boy who went away and never came back

Tears fill my eyes

This is the summer of '81

'War is over, if you want it' –

But no, that's not what we believe in

We are aware that there will always be destruction

'The dream is over' – yes, that's true

This is the summer of '81

Many people have lost their jobs

There's a lack of money – except for the rich

They still have far too much of it

The cars are getting faster all the time

The rain is turning black and acid and poisonous

Trees become skeletons

Animals disappear and never will be seen again

This is the summer of '81

The past is a heavy blanket that suffocates us

Our parents never gave us fresh air and a wide, open space

The lack of sun makes our skin cold and white

This is the summer of '81

Once there were steel plants and coalmines and textile  
workplaces

All these have come to a standstill

The workers can't work anymore – their large, strong hands  
are useless now

In the mornings, all remains quiet in their houses

Birds build nests in empty factories

This is the summer of '81

The age of disease

Of blood that gives life turning into blood that brings death

The age when it's no longer innocent to touch and kiss the  
one you love

Young men grow old in just a couple of months – the black  
spots of death on their skin

This is the summer of '81

We believe that no harm can touch us

We are young

We know we should be happy

We are not

We know that we should love life

We hate it

This is the summer of '81

The sun is shining like a light bulb in a prison cell

This is the summer of '81

Life hurts

To grow older is to learn to accept that pain

I don't want to grow old

This is the summer of '81

We are not going to save this world

We will watch our parents die in pain and disillusion

And then we'll say: it's not our fault

We see the concrete walls crumbling and decaying

And we know: we did not build those walls, so why bother?

We live in the tired cities, and that's where we want to be

We can fill the hole where once there was a heart

The smell of rotting flesh is like perfume for us

This is the summer of '81  
There's nothing we believe in  
We don't believe in fear as a basis for world order  
And that's why we don't believe in weapons  
We don't want your missiles  
We don't want your radiation  
Your nukes make us puke  
We don't want your stockpiles of destruction

This is the summer of '81  
Today we go out for a walk  
But we don't like what we see, out there  
There is fear in the eyes of the passers-by  
There are ugly words in white paint on the walls of the  
buildings  
There is a sharp wind blowing  
We'll go out walking  
But soon we'll turn around  
We'll go back to this crack in the wall that we call our  
home

This is the summer of '81  
Some days we remember things that we thought we had  
forgotten long ago  
We are aware, once again, that life is a precious gift  
That we are supposed to do something with it  
That we were not born to sit, all by ourselves, in an empty  
room and keep the doors closed  
That we should not be alone  
That we must go out and let love touch us  
Love – the greatest power  
Yes – some days we do remember all this  
This is the summer of '81  
Our parents must have been silly optimists  
They've thought that procreation was a good idea  
'Tomorrow this world will be a better place'  
That's what they firmly believed in  
That's how we came to exist

This is the summer of '81  
Today, we'll go to the doctor  
We'll ask him to kill the live-giving semen that must be  
there, somewhere in the dark quarters of our body

If our whole generation does the same  
Then it won't be long or this error called civilization is  
completely forgotten  
The summer of '81 should be the last of all summers  
Tomorrow there will be no voices asking to be heard  
No shrill words spoken  
The world will be a blessed place where nothing happens

This is the summer of '81  
This friend of us, she has disappeared  
She was a clever girl, but she had no strength  
A stranger invited her to come along with him  
And off she went with this unknown man  
Maybe to the Far East  
Maybe just to this place around the corner where they sell  
needles and pills  
She was such clever girl  
She was our friend  
We all adored her smile  
And when she spoke her words were like a tender song  
She was trying to find a way out of her velvet cage  
She went away – she followed the man in his black coat

She never came back

This is the summer of '81

It's all about division, about walls of separation

Our world versus theirs

Realism versus hope

Chemical dreams versus unbearable consciousness

Life versus destruction

This dark closed room versus the big dangerous world

We live in this divided world

We are half happy and half desperate

This is the summer of '81

Together we take a walk in the park

We sit down and watch the grass grow

Quietly, with long intermissions, we talk about the world  
that must change

By the end of the day we become melancholic

There is love around us – it's like a smell that the wind  
brings along

A smell that comes from the sea or from far-away flowers

It's all around us, for just a few moments – and then it's  
gone again

We cannot touch it or keep it with us

The long, silent evening begins

This is the summer of '81

In the West, people come to the streets to demand change –  
how should they live without work?

In the East, old factories keep producing dirt and rubbish  
People suffer – how can they live amidst danger, poison  
and oppression?

This is the summer of '81

Do we know where we come from?

Can we say where we want to go?

There's so much destructive power – it's a miracle this  
world still exists

This is the summer of '81

Some things will never change:

A girl and a boy will kiss for the first time

Gently forgetting everything around them

They won't tell the others and keep their discovery to  
themselves

Some things will never change:

A word is spoken for the first time

A new melody is made

An image is constructed that no-one has ever thought of be-  
fore

Our big fear is that we won't take part in all that

That we belong to the night and not to the new morning

That we will always be the outsiders

3.

This house

This house keeps its door closed

When I want to go out, it won't open

And when I'm in the street, it won't let me back in

This house has a smell of the past

The furniture's heavy

So many people who once were seated in those dark brown  
chairs are now gone

Nobody remembers they ever existed

This house once was the house of men who worked, six  
days a week

It was not even light in the morning when they would leave  
the house – the car plant or the shipyard or the steel works  
were expecting them early in the day

When they came back home, many hours later

It was dark again

This house

The dust on the wooden cabinet

The unread newspaper, coloured dark by the daylight

The kitchen that is never tidy

The coal fire that never gives enough warmth

The bed of the parents, with its threadbare cheap blankets

This house

The voices too loud and too shrill

The father, always tired, and the mother, deeply disappointed

This house

The child, alone in his room, builds a secret world

A world full of birds and colours and perfumed flowers

A world where he's the sovereign

This house

The child accepts it all, without resistance or comments

His world is not this house – it's the universe he has created in his head

This house

Long ago prayers were said, in these rooms

Desires were whispered

Curses were spoken

All those words, all those intentions

They haven't left a trace

This house is our past and our future

We were born here and we will forever live here

This house

Will it protect me from the thunderstorms of the future?

Will it be there, even when all the others have disappeared?

I need it

I can only bear to be alone

As long as I find shelter in this house

This house

One day we'll buy all the food we need and then we'll close the doors

The house will be the denial of the world

The denial of movement

The denial of change

The denial of all the dangers that wait there, outside

The house is a skin

It protects me from falling apart

Please, don't touch my skin

This house is like a womb

We are the infants who stubbornly refuse to be born

No white gloves for us, no crying in the light of the day

We prefer to float in the dark

We fit perfectly in this narrow space

We have no experiences and no desires

We don't know what curiosity is

It is all right for us

As long as we are fed

As long as we can gently move around

As long as the knife of reality doesn't cut in our flesh

This house

In these rooms my father was about to explain to me some  
important things about life

He wanted to create a new bond  
And I was prepared to listen  
Then – suddenly – he was taken away  
Not even his shadow was in the house anymore  
I never spoke to anyone the way I could have been speaking to him  
My father in this house

This house  
This house is nothing but concrete and plaster and some bricks  
I know it is cold and without a life of its own  
But when I press myself against its walls they become warm  
When I whisper my words as if they were spoken in a good friend's ear  
Then this house will listen and wake up  
It will be my friend and protector  
No-one can do me harm as long as I am in this house  
  
This house is where we live

It's in this house that we long for something we don't know  
the name of – it's in our blood, in our nerves  
It's in this house that we feel obliged to keep our thoughts  
and our sentiments for ourselves  
This house carries the weight of our unfulfillment

This house is my house  
Please, let me escape  
This house is my house  
Please, let me in

4.

This night

This night will be the beginning of something new

I am a young man and tonight I'll go out

The world is waiting to be discovered

I'm going to conquer it – with my body, my voice and my strength

This night

There will be light in the dark

There will be music to disrupt the silence

There will be laughter and screaming and a thousand words

There won't be time for silence and sleep

There will be an endless amount of possibilities

And I'm going to try them all

This night

I'll be the strongest

I'll be muscles and no sentiment

I'll be movement and no thoughts

This night

I'll be as fast as the wind and as calm as the moon

I'll be as cold as the Polar ice and I'll be warmer than the  
sand in Africa's desert

This night I'll be all and I'll be everything

The world is what I want it to be

This night

Will be a deep-black sequel to a bleak grey day

Night is all we need

Night is life

People die at night

People get born during the night

Night is a fairy tale

Night has its own secret laws

This night

Reality is not good enough for us

We have to create our own world

So we'll swallow some pills

We'll smoke some herbs

We'll have some substances that make our blood go faster

We live in an age of choice  
And this night we chose for this world that we alone can  
see  
This night  
We dream with our eyes wide open  
We deny gravity  
We don't know what time is  
We don't want to know what borders are  
This night  
We will live in a chemical paradise

This night  
I will have power  
I will find knowledge  
I will not be an innocent child anymore  
And when the night is chased by the new morning  
I will have shared my life with another life  
This night  
In the large dance hall closing time is feared  
The music will come to an end  
The soft, warm light will suddenly be cold and white  
There are no bonds, no links and no liaisons

We will all be by ourselves  
Ushered out by the doorman  
He is the judge who sentences us to yet another trip in the  
cold void  
A journey into the night

This night  
Where am I, and where are you?  
Don't leave me alone, please  
Don't turn my voyage into a bad trip  
This night was to be the night of our friendship  
So where are you now?  
This night we should delicately touch each other's hands  
But your hand is nowhere around – I can only touch a wall,  
here in the dark street where I walk alone  
This night  
I don't want to be alone  
I want to feel the warmth  
The warmth and the smell, coming from another body  
I want to share my loneliness  
Another body  
A body that will be like a glowing fire to my shivering

This night

I know that this night it will happen

I will find what I'm looking for

There will be words and gestures

We will touch and then we'll both recognize the other

I'll find the one who has been waiting for me all these years

Later on, when this night has almost become a new morning

My hand will once again touch the delicate skin, there, beside me on the white bed

Then the soft voice tells me that all I have been doing till this day is good

Is very good

I don't have to feel guilty anymore

This night

I know: this night will be followed by different nights

Nights when I'm all by myself, desperately dreaming of some companion

With nothing but thin air around me

But on those nights I will remember this night

The night that love came my way

5.

You know what?

They gave me this book, to read

It's called 'De avonden' and they told me: read it and  
then you will find that it is about a man just like you

This book is precisely about the way you think of the  
world – that's what they told me

So I read this book – I always do what I'm told by my  
teachers

But now – let me tell you, folks – let me tell you what  
happened

I found this book so utterly boring

There are no adventures in it and no landscapes

No sex and no tension

It's just as grey as the city my grandparents lived in

Okay, I thought – I will swallow all those words – it's  
supposed to be good for me – and who knows if in the  
very last chapter something exciting will happen...

But it was like eating old bread – healthy, perhaps – but  
no fun

Anyway – now I can say that I’ve read a book – so I  
might as well call myself an intellectual  
Books can tell you what life is all about – or so I hear  
Well – this book ‘De avonden’ told me that life is not  
about very much, really – and, yes, I must agree – that is  
some useful information

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Let me tell you what happened to me, folks  
In some dusty old cupboard I happened to find this book –  
don’t know how it got there  
‘De avonden’ it was called  
The what? I thought  
Whose avonden?  
But you know how things go, sometimes –  
I opened this book, just by curiosity, and I read a few pages  
And you know what?  
This book changed my life  
It’s like I’ve started at point Zero again – and I’m not exaggerating, folks

This book so full of clever thoughts and sharp observations  
It's like a metaphor, you know – a metaphor of life  
It tells us that life is not worth much – and that we humans  
are nothing more than hungry flies circling around a dying  
body  
'No' is the only answer to all questions, that's what 'De  
avond' tells us – I already thought something similar, but  
now this opinion has been validated – so it's no longer just  
an opinion of mine, it's a fact – confirmed by art itself  
I tell you what I'll do – tonight I'm going to read this book  
once again – every time I do so I discover some new, pain-  
ful truth  
It's the poetry of life, this book

\*\*\*

The world  
The city  
The men with white shirts and dark suits  
Smart art in white museums  
Black and white photos of life and death

Old schools and former factories are empty and get occupied

Multi-coloured paintings of Hell are sprayed on their walls

The boys with decorated faces – the music they make is like mentally disturbed children playing a guitar

There are piles of money and the future is gloomy

The world

The city

Old harbours are transformed into postmodernist nightmares

Old optimism quietly dies

The world

The city

People don't smile as often as they once used to

There are weapons

There is the capacity of killing people – and spare the buildings, because buildings are capital and capital must by all means be protected

There is the new N-Bomb  
The men who sit at their desks want them  
But in the streets are people who say 'no'  
On a cold Saturday in our capital city  
Hundreds of thousands of them get together  
They've come to the large open space in the city centre to  
say 'no'  
Their no is a yes  
They say 'yes' to survival  
'Yes' to a planet that is liberated from the clouds of destruction

Hundreds of thousands of people have come to the streets  
But millions of people remain in their houses  
They watch their TV's, they dream away witnessing the  
marriage of Charles and Diana  
They don't care about the future  
They don't say 'yes', they don't say 'no'  
They are the silent majority

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Now will you please listen to me?  
There are a few things I need to explain  
Explain them to you  
Explain them to myself  
I need to speak  
I want my thoughts to be free

Let me explain about this man  
This young man  
He walks in the streets of the city  
Day after day, night after night  
He goes and visits his friends  
Sometimes they won't open their door for him  
He's always on the defensive  
He and his friends, they never talk about the past  
He's clever, this young man  
But at the same time he's nothing but a grown-up child  
He's dependent of his parents  
He loves them and he despises them  
This young man  
He doesn't care much for his job

He never invests in anything  
For him life is just like the weather: it's there, it happens  
There's not much you can do about it

This man  
This young man  
Every night he dreams  
Dark tales of despair and cruelty  
When he awakes his room is cold  
Ice crystals cover the window  
Life is a void – he fills it with his stories  
But the stories evaporate, and the empty space is all that  
remains  
He has his secret thoughts  
They're not thoughts of liberation  
They're nothing but the mirror of his fears  
He has his imagination  
It's locked up, like a blind bird in a cage  
He has to live with all that is material  
His eyes and ears are sharp  
Reality causes pain  
He makes cruel jokes

Nobody will laugh  
He goes to see his friends  
They are not really his friends  
They just happen to know his name  
He longs for change  
His feet are so heavy  
He will never run away

This man  
This young man  
The echo of war and destruction is in everybody's ears  
It happened right here, in this city  
People have scars  
Houses remain empty  
Now the people of this town and of this country are free  
once again  
It doesn't really taste like freedom, though  
Oppression doesn't come from outside now  
It's within us  
We construct our own prison – imagined only, but so real  
none the less  
The war is not spoken about

It's like a fresh wound: you better not touch it

This man

This young man

He's suffocated by all what is not said

This man – he wants to have God to talk to

He's been told all his life that there is no God

That's why he constructs his own private God, in the dark  
silence of his head

God

God is always a creation

Our creation

We pretend, though, that it has created us

Us, and this world around us

We make this God responsible

We are like children

We don't want to be blamed for what went wrong

This man

This young man

When it's dark he touches his own body

But it's as if his cold hands touch a corpse

\*\*\*

It is well known that people who lack affection as a child  
are prone to criminal activities later in life

It is well known that large hands – and especially big  
thumbs – are a clear indication of an immoral character

It is well known that most homosexuals have feminine  
traits in their bodies

It is well known that Germans are efficient and that all  
Hindus are slow and lazy

It is well known that women are emotionally feeble

It is well known that Fascism is, theoretically, not such a  
bad idea

It is well known that böse Menschen haben keine Lieder

It is well known that in the past most things were better  
than they are now

It is well known that people who identify with their own  
nation are generally happy

It is well known that nowadays most children eat too much  
and go to sleep too late

It is well known that we have to apologize for all the  
mistakes our ancestors made

It is well known that sexual activities are a poor compensa-  
tion for an unhappy life

It is well known that artistic talent and insanity are closely  
related

It is well known that democracy is an invention that has not  
worked well

It is well known that those foreigners will never understand

It is well known that skinny people have no sense of hu-  
mour

It is well known that in the Third World they don't care as  
much about an individual human life as we in the West do

It is well known that morally weak boys are usually closely  
attached to their mothers

It is well known that a person with watery blue eyes and a  
greasy skin is likely to be full of perverse thoughts

It is well known that if I say something there is little chance  
that it will be taken well

\*\*\*

It's a fact that this Earth is very old  
It's a fact that most people are poor  
It's a fact that youth is the best time of our lives  
It's a fact that in most cases thieves and criminals get away  
with it  
It's a fact that people in general can't understand one another  
It's a fact that after all these centuries we still don't know  
what the secret of life is  
It's a fact that it's easier to make ugliness than to create  
beauty  
It's a fact that we've never asked to be born  
It's a fact that yesterday was better than tomorrow will be  
It's a fact that war and destruction will never come to an  
end  
It's a fact that words used to have a meaning but now  
they're just sounds that vaguely relate to reality  
It's a fact that Sigmund Freud invented all kinds of things –  
but who can tell us if they are true?  
It's a fact that most people used to smell very bad, but no-  
wadays they wash more often

It's a fact that what is not said will not be remembered  
It's a fact that some species of flowers and animals don't  
exist anymore  
It's a fact that Kafka knew it all  
It's a fact that we have disappointed our parents  
It's a fact that some things will never come to an end, and  
that's because they exist outside the framework of time  
It's a fact that not all of us are clever and capable of an in-  
dependent life  
It's a fact that some of us will find the love of their life –  
and then one day they will find a new love of their life  
It's a fact that much is said and little is heard  
It's a fact that we all have a heart, but it won't tell us what  
to do

6.

There's reality

We don't know what it is

There's theatre

Who knows what it is?

There's art that tells no fairy tales

It doesn't look like fireworks

It's not like sweet perfume

There's art that is reality

This young man

This young man who has little to believe in

Not in progress

Not in the words of older people

Not in himself

This young man in the city

He is restless

He walks and he wanders

This night he wants something new to happen  
He wants a new light to shine over his life

In an old broad street a group of people patiently waits  
Now they enter an old cinema

He joins them

The old cinema has replaced an even older theatre

Now it's a theatre once again

It is called the Mickery now

Nobody knows where that name came from

Its walls are covered with faded pink and gold

Here he sits and watches and is confused

This is new

This is new theatre – this is no theatre, but what is it?

He hears a name: Peter Halasz

And another name: Eszter Balint

Are they the friends who until today he has never had?

Squat Theatre

Mr. Dead and Mrs. Free

It's not a story

It's life on stage

A giant doll on stage has electric eyes

The actors are adults and children

There is violence and innocence

There is coherence and chaos

There are Mr. Dead and Mrs. Free

We still live with Mr. Dead and Mrs. Free

Who is afraid of Mrs. Free?

Who is afraid of Mrs. Free?

Who is afraid of being free?

What do we know about being free?

Can we ever be completely free?

No – to be absolutely free would mean to have no past and  
no bonds

To have no ambitions

Still it's being free what I am after

Free from commands that come from outside

Free from social pressure

Free from fear

Free – perhaps it doesn't exist, but I spend my life finding it

Who is afraid of Mrs. Free?

No

Don't be afraid

Don't be afraid

And who's afraid of Mr. Dead?

Who is afraid of Mr. Dead?

Who is afraid of death?

If death is just the denial of life – there's no need to fear it

If death is just one step in the chemical chain – there's no  
need to fear it

If death comes with the promise that you won't be forgotten – there's no need to fear it

If death is just the end – no pain or sense of guilt is left – there's no need to fear it

Who is afraid of Mr. Dead?

No

Don't be afraid

Don't be afraid

Mr. Dead is the strongest – I know that  
Mr. Dead can blow it all away – and what he can do, he  
will do  
Still, he should not be the master of my life  
I have some force as well and I'll do all I can to keep him  
out of doors  
Who is afraid of Mr. Dead?  
No  
Don't be afraid

Once they told me that life is about dying  
It may take many years – but in the end that's what will  
happen  
I remember having been, as a boy, in a cold room where the  
body of some old family member was lying  
To be dead is to be cold, I understood  
No, I won't be afraid  
I tell myself that life should be about living  
About freedom  
About loving Mrs Free and neglecting Mr Dead  
  
To live in freedom is to accept it all

Life as well as death

So don't be afraid

Don't be afraid

We open the windows and let the wind come in

The wind of freedom

We open our eyes and we can see death

And what you've seen you're not afraid of anymore

Who is afraid?

Don't be afraid

Who is afraid?

Don't be afraid

Live with Mr. Dead

Love Mrs. Free

God is dead

We are free

It's freedom we believe in

We see prisons

We hear the rattling of chains

Freedom is my religion

We have listened to false leaders

We have believed in false ideas

Freedom is my religion

They thought they could possess us

They wanted to tell us what to do

Freedom is my religion

I lived in a land with closed borders

Isolated from the outside world

Now its doors are open and the sun comes in

Freedom is my religion

They wanted to judge me, but I said no

I said: who are you to judge me? My truth is mine

Freedom is my religion

An ideal was formulated

I was supposed to sign for it, like all the others did

I took up a pen, but then my hand refused

Freedom is my religion

We don't know where we're going

But this ignorance makes us strong and happy

A wise man knows that there is so much he doesn't know

Freedom is my religion

We sing our song

Somebody tells us our voices are not trained and that we  
lack any kind of musicality – so will we please stop making  
that noise?

We sing even louder, we love our song

Freedom is my religion

Four men, we are

Four young men

To us, so much can happen

We are smart

We have skills and ambitions

Today, here in this place and in these locked-up conditions... Today may be not our best day  
But no worry – it will come  
Que será será  
(We know we've said that before)  
Freedom is my religion

We lived in a tale  
It was called 'De avond'  
Now we will wait for a new morning  
The morning when all will exist for the very first time  
Freedom is my religion

They told us that we'd be the carriers of negative fire: cold  
fire, black fire  
We were supposed to describe invisibility, to speak the  
words of refusal  
Now we no longer play that part  
Freedom is my religion

It started some time ago  
Our tale of empty houses and an unhappy world

To us, reality was like a swamp: dangerous ground, ready  
to make you drown

Somehow we survived, though

Somehow we knew

We discovered that we could create our own truth

We learnt that we must say ‘no’ to cynicism and dark des-  
pair

Freedom is my religion

We will live in a small house, with an even smaller garden

We’ll do some simple, manual work

We’ll think of the past, and then we’ll smile

We’ll think about what the future may bring – and we  
won’t care

Freedom is my religion

We will tell stories – they’re nothing but stories, but still they  
tell us what life is about

Life should be about eating and drinking every day, and  
about sleeping with the one you love besides you

Life is not a big deal – life is to carry on and smile

Life is to accept it all, including the bad days

Freedom is my religion

Yes

Freedom is my religion

We know where it's all going to end, but we make the voyage worthwhile

Freedom is my religion

To be free from inhibitions

To be free from a heavy past

We have our bodies and we have our thoughts

They can bring us everywhere

Even when we're locked up in one room we can see the world

Freedom is my religion

We were created in freedom

Freedom is where we've come from

Freedom is where we'll be going

Freedom is the only law we always must respect

Freedom is deep in the earth and high above us

Freedom is my religion

We know darkness exists  
We know oppressions exists  
We know that fences and borders and dumbness exist  
And we know that freedom must exist  
Freedom is my religion

We've read our last book  
We've heard our last sermon  
We've been to school for the very last time  
Now it's up to us  
Here we stand, with empty hands and with all our senses in  
their most active mode  
Freedom is my religion

We look at each other, and we see freedom  
We listen, and we hear the sound of freedom  
We'll be patient and we'll move quietly  
To be free is not to hurry anymore  
Freedom is my religion

Close your eyes and see your own horizon  
Cover your ears with your hands and hear new music

Open your mouth and let unknown words fill the wide,  
open space

Freedom is my religion

Freedom is my religion

Freedom is my religion

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*De avond (English spoken)* ging bij Nieuw West in première op  
30 oktober 2014 in De Toneelschuur in Haarlem

Concept en regie:

Marien Jongewaard

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*de avond*

Rob de Graaf (Amsterdam 1952) schrijft sinds circa 1978 toneelteksten. Hij werkte onder meer met Nieuw West, Keesen&Co, Dood Paard, Roy Peters/De Gemeenschap en het Ro Theater. Hij is docent aan de HKU (Writing for Performance) en aan de AHK (Mime-opleiding en ATKA). Voor zijn werk ontving hij twee keer de Taalunie Toneelschrijfprijs en ook de Prosceniumprijs en de Charlotte Köhlerprijs.

[www.denieuwetoneelbibliotheek.nl/rob\\_de\\_graaf](http://www.denieuwetoneelbibliotheek.nl/rob_de_graaf)

Toneelwerk o.a.

*De avond (English spoken)* – 2014

*Botox Angels\** – 2014

*White Lies* – 2013

*There is a discussion\** – 2013

*Colombina\** – 2013

*In die nag\** – 2012

*Pleinvrees\** – 2012

*Germanisch depressief* – 2011

*de avond*

*Freetown\** – 2010

*Interest\** – 2009

*Met Joran aan zee\** – 2009

*Stalker\** – 2009

*Amateurs\** – 2008

*Het harde rood van mijn gelijk* – 2006

*AHAB* – 2006

*Vrede* – 2006

*Schuur\** – 2006

*Love* – 2005

*Geslacht* – 2004

*Pony* – 2003

*Neanderdal* – 2001

*Ko* – 2001

*Rob – with a little help from my friends* – 2000

*Mission Impossible* – 1999

*Nu zou hij moeten spreken* – 1997

*2SKIN* – 1996

*Metamorphosen – Faces of Death* – 1995

*Les enfants du paradis* – 1992

*En een kleine jongen zal ze hoeden* – 1991

*Oost, een experiment* – 1991

*A Hard Day's Night* – 1991

*Pavlov* – 1990

*Lever* – 1990

*Pygmalion* – 1989

*Rinus\** – 1987

*We hebben je op het toneel gezien. Je stond daar maar en je deed  
niets* – 1978