

RODERIK SIX:

ON SPEAKING TERMS

a horse... a horse

Roderik Six is a literary critic for the site Cutting Edge and editor of the literary magazine De Brakke Hond. His first novel will be published in 2012 with publishing house De Arbeiderspers.

August is a cruel month, light is hard, shadows harsh - dark wells in which footsteps disappear. When the sun reaches the zenith, there is no place left to hide.

I pick up the phone, dial the number, hesitate on the last digit. Press abort.

We long for the short night, the brief moment when we can finally breathe without blistering our tongues. Outside, the liquid sound of a siren. It rolls closer like a shimmering wave, peaks, filling the room with trembling colours bouncing of the walls, and finally fades away, leaving me with even more silence.

The heat is unbearable. From a great height, fire pours down, streets are sweating oil and tar, light hammers against our eyelids until the blinds burst open - our skulls filled with a scorching void.

I wish I could melt away, only a puddle should remain: another stain on the sidewalk, another rush to the sewers underground, another lucky rat that quenches his thirst.

You must be somewhere in London.

The gentle electric sounds of the speed dial tickle my eardrum, like a soft stave tapping my brain. My attention bends towards the horn while the room, drifting in hot air, slowly revolves around an invisible point.

My unshaven cheeks grate the plastic and I think of the dry land, fields of rye after the harvest, a boy standing at the horizon, waiting, the overall scent of sweat and dust.

I can hear the distance.

After three beeps the fear sets in. A new heat arrives. From the inside. My hand begins to tremble. A new breed of sweat prickles my neck. I look at the screen and in that split second I am fully aware of the fact that I cannot hear her. My thumb presses the red button. Like I am squashing a bug.

I miss winter.

The crisp sound of snow beneath my feet, the frozen, tangible air you inhale, the world all covered in ice, undone of human presence. Drops of frost in the corner of your eye.

I even miss autumn.

The sickening scent of dying flowers on the graveyards. The endless stream of candy-craving ghouls knocking on my door. Long walks down the avenues back and fro, slowly sinking away in layers of decay, with no home to return to. Just a house, and unattended land.

Summer came guns blazing. All at once, someone lit a million matches, burning the earth, turning the streets into lakes of fire. The drought even pierced my dreams: I saw the devil drinking holy water.

There was a faint wave goodbye a frail back dissolving in the sunlight a sweat-smudged piece of paper with numbers

A handful of dust and vibrating plastic, a shiver and a breeze, and a voice, whispering:

The horror...the horror

SPEAKING ON TERMS

a hearse... a hearse

This is not an exit.

Please try again.
Please.
Please me.

Just give me the heat.

Please note: this is not an exit.
Alarms will sound.

For your own safety, CCTV-cameras are installed.

Someday a real rain is gonna come.
Someday a storm is gonna come.
Someday a barge will take you to the other side.

For an outside line, press zero.

You have one call pending.

Mind the gap.
Stand clear of the doors.

Due to the lack of coverage, reception may be weak, or non-existent. Emergency services will stay available at all times.

Ping.

One missed call. Undisclosed number.

All known all white

You have no new messages.

A l e a f f a l l s.

I must have read a thousand faces.

Stand right. Walk left.

For safety reasons, unattended luggage will be confiscated, and destroyed.

Calling Clapham Junction.
Calling Clapham Junction.

a bullet in a blue sky

Hell... Hello?