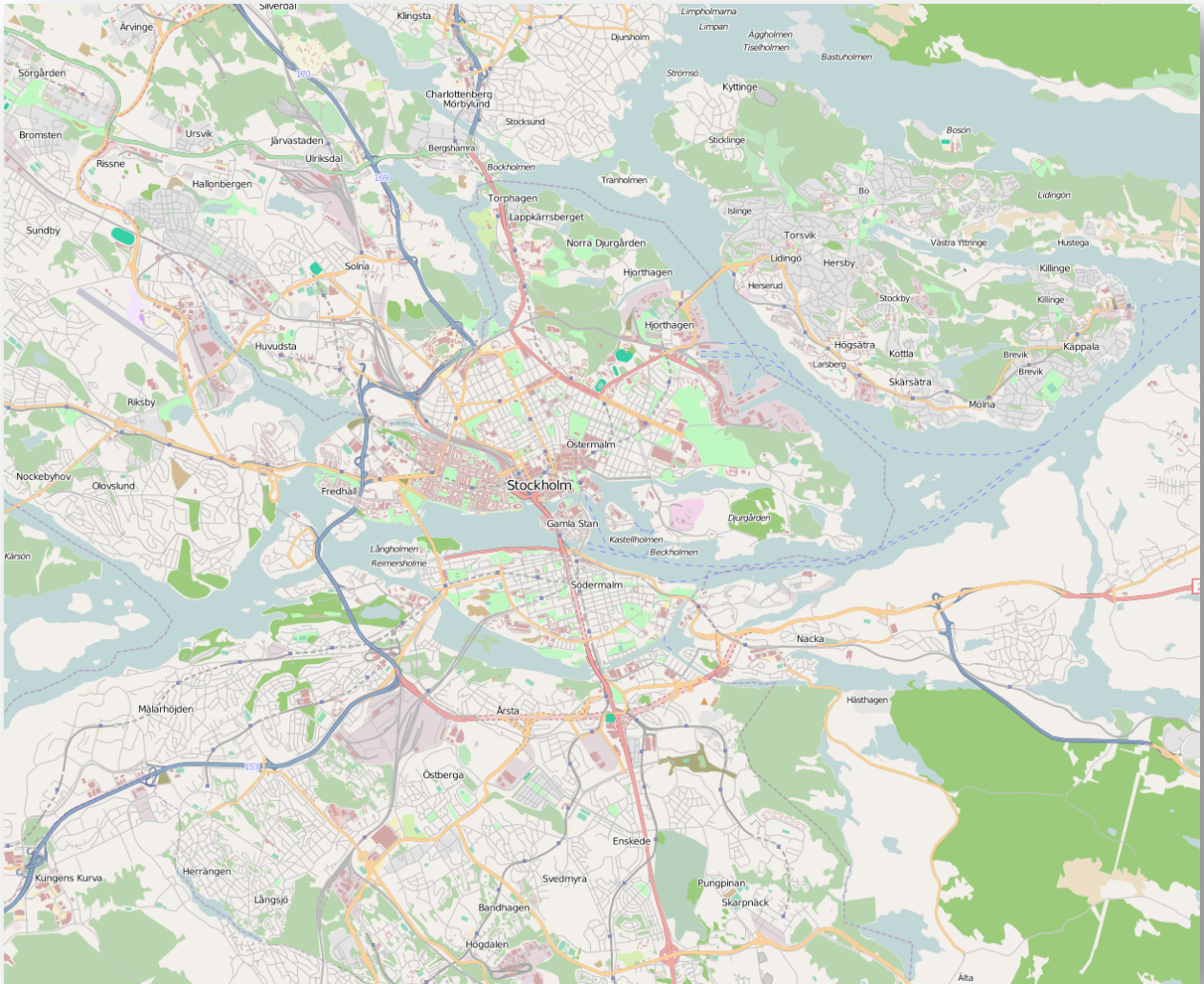


Archipelago

– for Lars

by Samuel Smith



PERCHANCE he for whom this bell tolls may be so ill, as that he knows not it tolls for him...

[Q 1 | House to black | :05]

[Q 2 | Narrator audio track 1.1 | :45]

Narrator, recorded: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to this evening's performance of *Archipelago*.

It is the purpose of art to better society by shining a light on the path of human actualization. The author and producers therefore feel an obligation to caution the audience that tonight's performance offers nothing in the way of hope, understanding, or spiritual improvement. In fact, if you are an astute and thoughtful patron, you will perhaps leave in a worse state than you arrived.

We wish to apologize for this unavoidable betrayal of trust. Ushers are standing at the end of each aisle to escort you from the theater should you wish to leave now. However, we regret to announce that we will be unable to refund your money.

There will be no intermission. Thank you for your attention. The performance will begin momentarily.

[Q 3 | Overhead projection screen: Slide 1 | :20]

As therefore the bell that rings to a sermon, calls not upon the preacher only, but upon the congregation to come: so this bell calls us all: but how much more me, who am brought so near the door by this sickness....

– John Donne

[Q 3 | Fade to black | :10]

[Act 1: Scene 1. A small living room in an urban apartment. A couch and chair. A small television sprays the room with white noise. Backdrop dominated by a large window, through which audience can see a typical apartment building. A print of Munch's "*Skrik*" hangs to the left of the window and a tattered playbill for a community theater production of Strindberg's *Spöksonatan* hangs to the right.]

Lars, offstage: Oh, look – the sky is beginning to fall...

----- Original Message -----

Subject: Terrible news
Date: Wed, 13 Jul 2005 11:55:59 -0600
From: Thyr <andersthyr@xxxxxxx.com>
To: sam@lullabypit.com

Lasse is dead.

He committed suicide yesterday.

....

[Act 1: Scene 2. Same. As lights come up, a snuffling is heard at the crack beneath the door.]

Narrator: Feral, red eye circling since man-apes made fire,
raking the floor, a growl
clawing its way into the back of a throat

jiggling the row of locks,
more locks with each passing year
but still not enough
and not enough door to hold them.

Voice, offstage: *There is no "enough."*

[Lars enters stage right]

Lars: You cannot lock out the empty, though.
It is the only thing I truly own.

I've noticed something lately
about the acoustics of my room –
everything sounds muffled
like wool socks pacing on hardwood.
When I go to Ringbom's,
it is there, too, and on the sidewalk home.

Chorus: A gouge waits quietly near the door
a drain is thirsty for blood
these bottles promise sleep
a razor will make you feel again
the window throws open its arms...

Lars (frightened): Again, that rattle at the lock...

----- Original Message -----






Subject: Re: Terrible news
Date: Wed, 13 Jul 2005 14:05:08 -0400
From: Sam Smith <sam@lullabypit.com>
To: Thyr <andersthyr@xxxxxxx.com>

Oh god.

Do Anders and Torbjorn know yet? Should I e-mail them? I haven't talked to Becca - will you handle that?

What happened? Suicide?! No no no no no no.....

SvD söndag 24 juli 2005

 <p>Älskade, min älskade Ingemar Bernhult * 18 mars 1943</p> <p>har mitt i den heta sommaren lämnat oss och livet och plötsligt sveper en iskall vind över Stjärtnäs Gård den 12 juli 2005</p> <p>Din älskade skog på Stjärtnäs bugar djupt till farväl och så gör vi, Dina närmaste och vännerna</p> <p>K A R I N</p> <p>Begravningsgudstjänsten äger rum i Färentuna kyrka tisdagen den 23 augusti 2005, kl 11.00. Därefter inbjudes till Svartsjö Slott. Anmälan till Arvid Wærners Begravningsbyrå tel 08-663 16 15 senast den 17 augusti 2005. Ingemar önskar a Ni alla tar ställning till organdonation 020- 77 11 77. Tänk gärna på Barncancerfonden pg 90 20 90-0. Tack till alla på avd B89 Karolinska Universitetssjukhuset i Huddinge.</p>	 <p>Älskad Saknad Lars Bjuvberg * 9 juni 1970 † 12 juli 2005</p> <p>Mamma Pappa och Ingert Janne och Charlotta Gudson Fredrik Cecilia Släkt och vänner</p> <p><i>Wherever I lay my hat, is my home</i></p> <p>Begravningen äger rum fredagen den 19 augusti 2005 kl. 11.00 i Högalids- kyrkan. Gärna ljus klädsel Efter akten inbjudes till minnesstund. Osa till Hall- doffs begravningsbyrå, tel. 08-105602 senast den 17 augusti. Tänk på Stads- missionen, pg. 900351-8.</p>	<p>har</p> <p>M</p> <p>Begravni 18 augusti Ljus kläd Anmälan til senast de gärna ett l för bröst</p>
 <p>Vår älskade Ingegerd Granath * 3 mars 1922</p>	 <p>Vår käre Ewert Rosta</p>	

----- Original Message -----

Subject: re: Terrible news
Date: Wed, 13 Jul 2005 11:55:59 -0600
From: Thyr <andersthyr@xxxxxxx.com>
To: sam@lullabypit.com

....

I need to get this out of my system. I've had more friends taking their own lives the last couple of months, so I feel my living space has shrunk. Not comfortable at all. I'll be in touch again when I know more.

Voice, offstage: When I first met them
they tried to explain how
they aren't good at expressing
emotion, that their language isn't built for
grief or love.

e-Mails reach me late at night.

You were raging in a hollow room
yet cast no echo,
no shadow, no reflection.

----- Original Message -----

Subject: re: Terrible news
Date: Wed, 13 Jul 2005 12:11:58 -0600
From: Thyr <andersthyr@xxxxxxx.com>
To: sam@lullabypit.com

Lars had sent a letter to his mother. He jumped out the window of his apartment. My guess is he was alone, and the thoughts grew too big... Becca will know more, hopefully...

Chorus: You've heard, by now. He worked for you
and was your brother's friend
since childhood.

----- Original Message -----

Subject: Re: Sad news
Date: Wed, 13 Jul 2005 22:03:50 -0400
From: Sam Smith <sam@lullabypit.com>
To: Anders Gronstedt <anders@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx.com>

Anders Gronstedt wrote:

>I know, I'm stunned, Dan had only had sporadic contact with him during the last six months but was one of his best friends. Dan said that Lars had been depressed over lack of success in life...<

There is no such thing as "enough."

To leave a few scraps on the floor is to "leave money on the table."

To throw people into the street is "efficiency."

>He sent the letter to his mother, but then waited until the next day. She got the letter and immediately called the police to go. And his girlfriend. When they arrived, Lasse was sitting in the window. The police broke in the door and he yelled at them to stay away. When they came toward him is when he jumped. I guess his girlfriend was in the street below.<

The beast has come for its first victim.

<!-- I wrote something a couple months back wondering if they were even human anymore. "They."
"Them." Who are these "them," anyway?

Here it is:

*So is American society evolving a new breed of ubersapiens, a hyper-rich class of overlords whose wealth is more than simply beyond reach for a Regular Joe – it constitutes a difference of type so dramatic that even if you found yourself with that many zeroes to the left of the decimal in your bank statement, you'd still be inherently incapable of relating to others in your tax bracket? Maybe there's value in examining the **empathy** we see in our business and political leaders and other assorted power elites. Ask yourself not just to what degree you think these people empathize with you, but to what degree they are spiritually, emotionally, and morally capable of doing so.*
:http://lullabypit.livejournal.com/127376.html:

Gibson had it right with his Tessier-Ashpools, his Virek. But am I projecting too much of my own rage? --
>

Voice, offstage: *Lex talionis*

dead air and heat
a shadow in which nothing will grow.

The Law of the Predator
says

we are either hunter or food,
eaten from within or devoured from without;
satiation is death.

We must be great cats feeding,
ripping the flesh from our children.

Breeding flies,
polished bones a lesson for the weak.

Chorus: Why do you colonize Lasse's decision?

Voice, offstage: *Any man's death diminishes me.*

----- Original Message -----

Subject: re: Becca
Date: Thu, 14 Jul 2005 11:33:07 -0400
From: Sam Smith <sam@lullabypit.com>
To: Thyr <andersthyr@xxxxxxx.com>

Thyr wrote:

> I chatted with Becca earlier today, and told her that you
also know about what happened. She thought that was good.
They meet in different constellations right now, in
Stockholm, to talk about Lasse and at least try to
understand. The funeral doesn't seem to take place until a
month from now, when all people have returned from
holiday.<

Thanks. I'll e-mail Becca. Keep me posted.

----- Original Message -----

Subject: RE: lasse
Date: Fri, 15 Jul 2005 12:29:53 -0600
From: Thyr <andersthyr@xxxxxxx.com>
To: sam@lullabypit.com

Hey Sam,

Becca has given you some more of the story, I presume... Kinda puts
the whole thing in a different light to me. Right now I am so angry...



[Q 14 | Fade to black | :05]

[Q 15 | Overhead projection screen: Slide 4 | :30]

...it's a lonesome thing to be passing small towns with the
lights shining sideways when the night is down, or going in
strange places with a dog nosing before you and a dog nosing
behind, or drawn to the cities where you'd hear a voice
kissing and talking deep love in every shadow of the ditch,
and you passing on with an empty, hungry stomach failing
from your heart.

– John Millington Synge

[Q 16 | Fade to black | :05]

7/13/05 10:28 pm

[Leave a comment] [6 comments] [2 Trackbacks] [PermaLink]

Funereal for a friend

I feel more rage right now than I have any hope of containing. I have no place to put it, no tools for suppressing it, no nothing but this goddamned flailing of the hands and a scream with no channel on which to broadcast.

now playing: "Last Stop: This Town" by eels

----- Original Message -----

Subject: RE: hi
Date: Fri, 15 Jul 2005 19:51:29 +0200
From: Rebecca Cederstrom <rcederstrom@xxxxxxx.com>
To: 'Sam Smith' <sam@lullabypit.com>

~~Honestly I am still mostly mad and confused. I can't understand what could have happened or what was going on in Lasse's mind to do this. And to do it in the way he did. I don't know how many details you know by now, but it seems like he did it in front of his girlfriend, with his Mom close by and the cops at the door of his apartment trying to stop him. There are slightly different stories coming from all directions, so I wouldn't use it quite yet, but that's pretty much how it happened.~~

I went to Ringbom's last night and they didn't know yet. Apparently Lars was there just hours before, coming in at 4 pm when they opened, had two beers, spent most of the time on his cell, and then left without saying goodbye or paying for his beer.

I hadn't seen him since I got back to Stockholm either, since I am here indefinitely I was taking my time settling back into my old routines. All in all things have not changed a lot. Weird how life goes on, just very much slower and more sad right now. All of my friends and family knew Lars, so we spend a lot of time just hanging out and talking about good times, and trying to understand, but I don't think we will ever get an answer and that's really the hardest part.

[Act 3: Scene 7. Lars' living room. Dark. The print of "*Skrik*" and the playbill have been replaced by portraits – one of a man in his 50s, the other of a man in his 30s. Both bear a resemblance to Lars. Lars and The Girlfriend stand in front of the window locked in a motionless embrace. Tight spot on Rebecca, stage right. She is speaking to someone offstage left.]

Rebecca: Lars is doing the world a favor. We will all be better off without him. He is a bad friend, son, boyfriend and everything he touches wilts like a cut flower that stands too long in the heat. Nothing he does is good enough for his father and brother, and they make him feel the failed dreams that wake him at night.

Girlfriend: He's been planning this for quite some time. He has not seen his mother for six months, not Danne either, and our friends say that, even for Lasse, he has been excessively "huggy" when they last saw him.

Rebecca: He is in a worse mental state and in more need of professional help than anyone knows. Happy cheery Lasse is just another of the roles he loves to play. The thing is, he feels what he does is not an egoistical act, but something as a favor to us all. Already now I hear friends of him saying things like: "Why didn't I appreciate Lasse more?" And, "Why didn't we tell him how great he was more often?"

Girlfriend: I did. I do. No one has known.

Rebecca: And so they are taking on blame. I don't even want to begin imagining what his parents, brother and girlfriend are feeling. As much as I love Lars and at times we have been close, I do feel like the world evolves around him a lot. He was a good listener, but in the end it was him we talked about the most. And that is how it was up until the end.

Girlfriend: Hur får han dig att känna dig när han spelar rollen av en lytnare?*

* *"How does he make you feel when he is playing the role of listener?"*



----- Original Message -----

Subject: RE: thx
Date: Fri, 2 Sep 2005 21:36:23 +0200
From: Rebecca Cederstrom <rcederstrom@xxxxxxx.com>
To: 'Sam Smith' <sam@lullabypit.com>

Not sure if Thyr told you, we now have the open goodbye letter Lars wrote to his friends. It's not very long, about a page. It's in Swedish though. It's very carefully written, doesn't sound like him at all, offers no real explanation, except that he couldn't be who he wanted to be and therefore he could not stand living, but an apology and he asks God to forgive him. Never heard him say anything religious before.

I'm reluctant to translate because it seems he put so much effort into it to make it sound just right and I might not get his points in a translation?

Maybe ask Thyr for a comment or if he is willing to give it a shot? He has a copy, but I haven't talked to him about it, so I don't know what he thinks.

And you can have the Swedish version if you want.

....

Chorus: We cannot bury you, Lasse.
 We must beg another tribe to
 cut you from the tree and
 carve your grave.

We have

no sacrament
no bell to ring
no book of prayer
no totem

Our gods are like our faces,
dead in their language and
desperate to find you
before night falls
bright-eyed and
cloaked for the hunt.

----- Original Message -----

Subject: Translation
Date: Sat, 03 Sep 2005 13:07:23 -0600
From: Anders Thyr <andersthyr@xxxxxxx.com>
To: sam@lullabypit.com, rcederstroem@xxxxxxx.com

I gave the translation of Lasses letter a shot. Read it through Becca, to see if you have any other ideas on the translation. I'm not comfortable with some parts of the texts, but couldn't find a better way to express it. It is hard to capture the essence, and to honor his last words.

Attachment: lassesavskedsbrev.jpg (48 kb)
 lassesavskedsbrev.doc (36 kb)

(Beloved, make this text public any way you choose. Put it on our community web forum and mail it to my friends or something like that. I want to try to explain to everyone who wants to know.)

To kill oneself is not brave. It is cowardly. But the action in itself takes courage. I've been fighting with the thought for a while, and I have realized it takes great courage to be this cowardly.

I wanted to be someone else. When I couldn't, I didn't want to be anyone at all. It's that simple. It is fascinating, to suddenly realize you want to be no more. When the pain is so strong that it numbs all other feelings. The first time the thought struck me, I didn't want to confront it. But when it finally settled in and grew strong, it was the only thought that could bring me comfort. Everything else, all other joys of life only became anesthesia. When I was alive and conscious, every second was torment, except when I could focus my attention on something outside myself. Be it love, theatre, fantasies, alcohol, drugs. I tried hard, but eventually, reality caught up with me. In the end, all that remained, was death. And death became a way out, not a cul-de-sac.

That's where I am now.

I think that I, and everybody else finding themselves in this situation, find peace, and nothing else, in death. Whichever method chosen. I don't believe in God being a judge. I believe in a forgiving God, who embraces me and gives me peace. I have never intentionally harmed anyone, except now, when I do this to myself. When I do it to myself, I inflict great pain on many other people. But I hope I expiate my dark deed through the deed in itself. This before God.

To the people I have hurt, I just want to say forgive me. Try to forgive me. I did my best. But it wasn't enough.

[Älskade, publicera det här på något stätt. Lägg det på glädsforumet och maila det till mina vänner eller något sånt. Jag vill försöka förklara för alla som eventuellt vill veta.]

Att döda sig själv är inte modigt. Det är fegt. Men själva handlingen kräver mod. Jag har kämpat med tanken ett tag nu, och jag har insett att det kräver ett enormt mod att vara så här feg.

Jag ville vara någon annan än den jag är. När jag inte kunde vara den jag ville, ville jag inte vara någon alls. Så enkelt är det. Det är fascinerande, att helt plötsligt inse att man inte vill vara längre. När smärtan blir så stark att den dövar alla andra känslor. När tanken slog mig, första gången ville jag först inte ta i den. Men när den slog rot och växte sig stark var det den enda tanke som kunde ge mig tröst. Allt annat, alla andra glädjemedel blev bara bedövningsmedel. När jag levde och var vid medvetande var varje sekund en plåga, utom när jag kunde rikta mitt medvetande mot en annan punkt än mig själv. Kärlek, teater, fantasier, alkohol, droger. Mycket försökte jag, men till slut kom verkligheten ifatt mig. När allt annat var avskalat fanns bara döden kvar. Och döden blev en utväg, inte en återvändsgränd.

Det är jag nu.

Jag tror att jag, och alla andra som finner sig i den här situationen, när frid och inget annat i den vita döden, eller den blodiga, eller hur vi nu väljer att utforma handlingen. Jag tror inte på en dömande Gud. Jag tror på en förlåtande Gud, som tar mig till sig och ger mig frid. Jag har aldrig medvetet skadat någon, utom nu, när jag gör det här med mig själv. När jag gör det mot mig själv gör jag många andra otroligt illa. Men jag hoppas att jag sonar min egärning genom gärningen i sig. Detta inför Gud.

Inför de människor som jag har skadat vill jag bara säga förlåt mig. Förlåt förlåt mig. Jag gjorde så gott jag kunde. Men det räckte inte.

L.B.

----- Original Message -----

Subject: RE: hi
Date: Sat, 16 Jul 2005 09:27:55 +0200
From: Rebecca Cederstrom <rcederstrom@xxxxxxx.com>
To: 'Sam Smith' <sam@lullabypit.com>

He died like he lived - with drama and noise.

As horrible as all this is, and don't take this the wrong way, sometimes it makes me smile. Even though that's not really what I believe. I hope he can see us all down here, making him the lead in his last big play.

I think he would have liked all the attention.

But it is absolutely terribly awful. Like you ask, how can someone keep all that pain inside for so long?

Maybe at some point I can be more objective, right now I'm more angry than anything else.



8/21/05 11:35 am

[[Leave a comment](#)] [[2 comments](#)] [[1 Trackback](#)] [[PermaLink](#)]

As the ground slowly heals

The truth is that there's not much in this for anyone. It's cold and alienating and distant and hateful and there's not much honest way around it. I wanted to say something meaningful, something that would provide perspective or hope or relief. But it's not there, never will be, never *could* be. The irony here is that if you *do* somehow make meaning of it, you're lying.

[sigh]

I guess I can take some small relief in the fact that early reports were wrong on one count. Thyrr just wrote me this:

>It seems Lars girlfriend never did see him jump. Apparently, there were several stories in circulation, and it seems like this one was false, or a wild rumour. But I think Becca might have told you this already.<

Wild rumors in the immediate aftermath. Panic, insensate terror in the eyes of the mob, madly fleeing

calamity, like the Freas illustration on *News of the World*. All part of the drama, I suppose, and now the drama is winding down.

There's this part of me that deeply resents the sheer banality of tragedy. It seems like a betrayal of trust if we allow it to fade. Like somehow Lasse's death means less because his girlfriend *wasn't* on the street below.

Or maybe I resent how Hollywood has flattened my affect.

On another note, they shot Hunter's ashes out of a cannon last night. *Hah!* There's enduring, epic tragedy for you....

now playing: "Stranger in My Skin" by Fiction 8

----- Original Message -----

Subject: Radio Philly
Date: Sun, 14 Aug 2005 23:49:15 -0600
From: Anders Thyr <andersthyr@xxxxxxx.com>
To: sam@lullabypit.com

Hi Sam,

oh well... On Friday at 11, Lars is buried. Guess most of us have come to terms with reality. We will bid him farewell, and remember the good times with him.

[Q 58 | Fade to black | :10]

[Q 59 | Overhead projection screen: Slide 9 | :30]

**You poor little child, child of this world of illusion, guilt,
suffering and death, this world of endless change,
disappointment, and pain. May the Lord of Heaven be
merciful to you upon your journey.**

– August Strindberg

[Q 60 | Fade to black | :05 (Dark :15)]

[Q 61 | House up | :10]



Acknowledgments

My thanks to Anders Thyr, Rebecca Cederstrom and Anders Gronstedt for the use of their words and images in “Archipelago.” Also, thanks to Anders and Becca for their advice, counsel and translation help.

Thanks to Jefferson Lindquist for his technical theater advice on “Archipelago.”