



# A hijacking

**Director:** Tobias Lindholm  
**Country:** Denmark  
**Date:** 2012

*A review by A O Scott of the **New York Times**:*

In “A Hijacking,” his assured, intense second feature, the Danish director Tobias Lindholm turns tedium and frustration into agonizing suspense. Unfolding over a span of weary, stressful months, its action mainly confined to the below-deck parts of a cargo ship and a suite of sterile corporate offices in Denmark, the film is at once a probing psychological case study and a ripped-from-the-headlines exploration of modern sea piracy.



The seizure of the ship, the Rozen, by Somali pirates jolts a company executive, Peter C. Ludvigsen (Soren Malling), out of his master-of-the-universe routine. A dapper, controlled boss, Peter clearly relishes his ability to project steely confidence in times of crisis. While he hardly welcomes the taking of his ship, he is sure that he can deal with the situation, and the transition to crisis mode represents a change of pace from the deal-making and browbeating of an underling (Dar Salim) that usually occupies his time.

But meetings with an American consultant (Gary Skjoldmose Porter) and initial negotiations by satellite phone with Omar (Abdihakim Asgar), the pirates’ “translator,” who channels messages from unseen leaders, suggest that a quick and clean resolution is unlikely. Peter becomes something of a hostage in his workplace, rarely going home (never as far as the audience can see) and succumbing to uncharacteristic displays of temper and uncertainty. Although the pirates’ goals are strictly mercenary, you can almost imagine that humiliating this smug capitalist is their real intention.

Perhaps it is, but Mr. Lindholm leaves the geopolitics of their actions in the background. With the exception of Omar, the hijackers are undifferentiated, almost spectral figures, whose language and behavior baffle and terrify the crew. A different kind of film would have ventured beyond the perceptions of the European characters and offered at least a speculative glimpse at the world of their captors.

Aboard the Rozen, the camera’s attention is focused on the cook, Mikkel (Pilou Asbaek), a friendly, shaggy fellow who could not be more unlike his boss back home. In a sense, the two of them suffer the ordeal of captivity together, though the stakes are starkly different. For Peter, the fate of his ship is a financial calculation and a matter of corporate honor. He is advised to take a hard line and wait out his adversaries because making their crime too easy or lucrative will only encourage others. But the lives of Mikkel and the other crew members are in play, and to them the delay seems cruel and senseless.

Mr. Lindholm tells this story with an objectivity that sometimes feels cold but that also gives “A Hijacking” dramatic credibility. Its power accumulates slowly and subtly, with the threat of violence hanging in the air and the hope of a solution hovering just over the horizon.

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