

nina kuclar stiković

the mermaid

one hundred and eighty-seven years later

october 2024

Dramatic characters

lia

magik meggi

eve

siren

K

waiter

peter

seahorse

Prologue

*The little mermaid
turned fifteen
one hundred and eighty-seven years ago.*

*The little mermaid
left her five sisters
one hundred and eighty-seven years ago.*

*The little mermaid
left her collective
one hundred and eighty-seven years ago.*

*The little mermaid
gave up her voice
one hundred and eighty-seven years ago.*

*The little mermaid
gave up her body
one hundred and eighty-seven years ago.*

*The little mermaid was left all alone
one hundred and eighty-seven years ago.*

*The little mermaid
stuck at the age of fifteen
has been searching for her voice and her body
for one hundred and eighty-seven years.*

PART ONE

1. searching for a voice

(lia is on the phone while sitting at her desk in her one-bedroom flat, where she also has a keyboard and a guitar. the flat doubles as a music studio, a space where intimate and professional lives merge into one. a space that is extremely neat and tidy. during her phone conversations, lia occasionally eats some fruit cut up on a plate. also next to her is a bowl of salad and an empty smoothie container.)

lia: yeah, I left ‘em for you at the reception desk, on a USB stick. five demos. I also attached the lyrics separately ... I can also email them over, of course, no problem. ... the vocal and the piano... the main melody ... I mean ... I've got my own style, but I'm pretty open genre-wise. ... depends on the team I'd get. ... and the production abilities. ... I'm going for another tender, too. my submission to the ministry is done, and a European tender is next ... for young voices, that one, yes ... I see ... righto, I'll email them over, no sweat, and when you manage to have a listen, I'm looking forward to your response. feedback. insights ... thank you so much. ... bye-bye.

(hangs up the phone.)

open ... you're open genre-wise ... did you hear yourself right?? ... you are open? ... yeah, open, I guess. let the guy tell you what genre he has in mind ... if this means playing some rubbish ... open ... well, I can do that, too ... *(takes a deep breath.)* open. *(exhales deeply.)* he's your last chance anyway ... *(takes a deep breath and exhales.)* ... ooooopeeeeen ... *(takes a deep breath and exhales.)* manifest manifest manifest ... *(takes a deep breath and exhales.)* ... ooooopeeeeen ... *(takes a deep breath and exhales.)*

(phone rings.)

yeah siren, what's up? ... when? ... dunno. after what happened the other day ... I'm not sure I want to come at all. ... not sure I want to see you two again. ... yup, fifteen years overdue. ... I'll see. I've got a ton of work. ... don't even mention meggi's name to me ... eve's coming, too? ... what??? the weird sister is shutting down? in a week's time? ... hang on, what ... why are they shutting it down? they can't just close the weird sister like that! ... fine, I'll be there. but not for you two. I'll be there for the weird sister. ... I've got another call, gotta run. ... friday at five at the weird sister. ... oh fuck. *(she stands there anxiously for a second.)*

(lia answers the incoming call.)

hello? ... good afternoon. ... yes, speaking. ... yes ... yes, there can be an accompanist, it can also be a duet, female-male or female-female ... a violin? ... yes, but then we'd need someone to play it. no, I don't play the violin. ... no, violinists don't sing as a rule. ... it's a bit difficult to play the violin and sing at the same time. ... well, that really depends on you ... on your budget, yes ... I can also do it solo, yes. ... the piano and the vocal. ... when's your wedding? ... the seventh ... alright, one moment. *(looks at the planner, sees something scheduled that day.)* ...

umm ... uh-huh ... I think that'll work, yeah. ... what time? ... yes ... look, let me give you my email ... lia.1995@gmail.com ... send me what you have in mind and I'll let you know how much it would cost, yes. ... today, of course. ... speak soon, thank you so much for your call and interest. bye-bye. ... you need to change your email. something more professional.

(still holding the phone, she makes a call.)

hey, mom! ... how are you? ... how's jax? ... did you guys go to the vet at all? ... I can also take him myself, yeah. when I have time. ... mom, is there any chance that we could move dad's sixtieth to a week later ... the fourteenth ... yes, mom, I know it's on the seventh ... something's come up ... you've already sent out the invites? ... shit ... yes, it's the job ... pffft ... who sends the invites so early? ... more than a month in advance ... yes, yes, I know, okay ... yeah, I'm not sure if I can make it now ... yeah, mom, I know ... I want that, too ... you'll be partying late anyway ... what if I turn up later on in the evening? ... no ... I've already said yes ... you know I can't turn down a project when one arrives ... really? ... you'll try and reschedule? ... well, do ask dad first. ... okay, thanks so much, thaaanks! ...

(K enters lia's room. he is wearing sunglasses and holding his hands in the air as if dancing. he walks around lia, dancing with a smile.)

lia: I'm doing fine, yeah, I am totally okay otherwise. ... nah, I'm not sad anymore. ... that's old news, mom. ... we haven't spoken at all. ... I'm way too swamped with work to think about it. no time for shoulda woulda coulda here, hello! I'm busy working! I'm doing great! ... I can't, I'm working this weekend too, yeah. ... I'm okay, mom, I promise. ... say hi to dad, and thanks a million! love you!

2. collective crisis

(siren, magik meggi and eve together at the weird sister bar. they are sitting at a corner table with a bench and two chairs. siren is drinking tea, magik meggi an aperol spritz and eve a draft beer.)

lia: so so so sorry I'm late. the rehearsal went on for a bit.

eve: hey, liaaaaa! shot – shoot! *(lia and eve do their little hand greeting)*

lia: shoot – shoot! if it weren't for you, I wouldn't have come at all.

siren: *(to eve)* oh get real. she actually said she was coming for the weird sister.

magik meggi: hey, lia. *(lia completely ignores her.)*

lia: I can't believe it. I can't believe they're shutting this place down just like that.

magik meggi: how are you doing, lia? *(lia keeps ignoring her.)*

lia: so, today is the last day it's open?

siren: lia, meggi asked you a question.

lia: yeah I heard. I just doubt meggi really cares about how I'm doing, or any one of us for that matter.

eve: have I missed something again?

magik meggi: spot on, eve, you've missed something. again.

lia: you missed their brilliant plan, the "couples only" dinner.

eve: you mean the dinner I wasn't even invited to?

siren: hold on, eve, that's not true at all.

lia: *(to eve)* consider yourself lucky you missed it.

siren: can we first take a deep breath together and release this negativity from our bodies? get ourselves nice and centred /

lia: no thanks. I'd rather stay in my negativity, alone like a preeeeeehistoric fossil in the middle of the maryana trench, than take one breath together with you two.

magik meggi: *(to lia)* we only wanted what's best for you.

eve: *(to lia)* at least you got invited.

lia: I'd rather not have been invited than having them invite a +1 for me.

siren: eve, it's not true at all, truly. meggi messaged you everywhere.

magik meggi: on whatsapp, messenger, instagram, viber.

siren: and by email.

(eve picks up her phone.)

magik meggi: but her highness is too busy to check messages from her besties.

lia: besties ...

eve: *(scrolling through her phone)* is this the email "dinner with my mates"?

magik meggi: if you hadn't been blanking everyone, you might have seen it earlier.

eve: if a person doesn't see a message, you give them a ring.

magik meggi: there's a difference between not seeing a message and ignoring it.

siren: the fact is that the two of you have missed each other to the point of tension. am I right?

eve: three ... two ... one ... / zero

magik meggi: you're the most selfish person alive.

eve: and you're what, an altruist?

siren: oi, no need to fight.

magik meggi: is that a question or what?

eve: maybe we need another intervention.

siren: they can't just take the weird sister from us. every intervention we ever had was here.

waiter: hullo, lia! what can I get you?

lia: hey miha, what's up! are you really shutting this place down?

waiter: they are. I'm not shutting anything down.

lia: and today's the last day?

waiter: the last.

lia: fuck.

waiter: what'll it be, the usual?

lia: go on then.

eve: and four williams pear brandies!

siren: three.

magik meggi: the weird sister is closing down, literally.

siren: this is literally why I called you lot.

magik meggi: shall we have a toast?

siren: I don't feel like faking happiness right now.

lia: so drink out of nostalgia.

eve: in memory of our interventions?

waiter: three? four?

magik meggi: make it four.

(waiter leaves.)

lia: and one hot chocolate! with cream!

eve: so, how was this "dinner with my mates"?

lia: amazing.

magik meggi: good. thanks for asking.

siren: meggiiii iiiii ... *(goes over to magik meggi, takes her left hand and holds it up to eve. there is a ring on meggi's left ring finger. a silver band with a stone.)* dah dah dah duuum, dah dah dah duuum ...

eve: congratulations.

siren: eve ...

magik meggi: thank you.

eve: how come you invited everybody to your engagement dinner?

siren: she didn't know he was going to propose.

magik meggi: I actually had my suspicions.

siren: what!?

eve: of course you had your suspicions. as if you ever had a spontaneous moment in your life.

magik meggi: actually, peter gave me a pre-engagement ring four years ago.

siren: what? four years ago? why didn't you tell me?

eve: at 24?

magik meggi: yes. because he knew I was the one, but we were a bit too young to get married really.

eve: and now you've suddenly grown older or what?

lia: wasn't that when you wanted to do your master's in London?

magik meggi: yeah, but then brexit happened. ... and then covid.

eve: and the pre-engagement ring to boot.

(tense silence between besties.)

magik meggi: what do you mean?

lia: you changed your mind overnight about the studies in London. although you were accepted.

siren: oh yes! I remember that. I checked the position of the sun and the planets and there was no reason anywhere for such sudden change. not even in the horoscope!

magik meggi: brexit came about.

eve: it was known that brexit would come about. since 2016.

lia: and you applied for a master's in London regardless.

magik meggi: there was the lockdown, the whole world came to a halt.

siren: and dolphins swam into Venice.

eve: do you think he gave you the pre-engagement ring because he thought the world was coming to an end, or because he thought you'd leave him for London?

magik meggi: okay, siren, if dominik told you he wanted to spend his life with you, would you still go abroad and leave him behind?

eve: no, you convince him to follow you.

magik meggi: you're the one to talk, mrs. one-night stand. siren?

siren: well, I wasn't with dominik at 24, but with ... jan, erik, juš, jure ... jure? I don't know, I would have to be in that situation. I'm really not the right one here to ask ... all I know is, I'd never want to go abroad anyway. life in a metropolis? ... ugh.

magik meggi: I guess nobody would have stopped you from going because neither žan, erik, juš nor jure meant to you what peter means to me.

eve: shall I recite my little list of exes, too?

SONG: SITUATIONSHIP

lia:			magik meggi:
EXCLUSIVESHIP		eve:	MK-84
STEADYSHIP	siren:	luka	
SECRETSHIP	baggy jeans		
BREAKINGSHIP			BLU-109
BROKENSHIP		lin	
	bootcut jeans		
BROKEN HEART		lun	
PHONESHIP	boyfriend jeans		MK-83
PHONE CALL			
SEX LINE CALL		lovro	RP RUGER
BOOTY CALL	cropped jeans		AMERICAN
ONE-NIGHT STAND			R2
TINDER STAND		marcel	
TINDER DATE			PAP RUGER
TINDER HATE			1262
BUMBLE DATE	embellished jeans	miha	
BUMBLE HATE			

BUMBLE GHOST TINDER GHOST INSTAGRAM GHOST MESSENGER GHOST	flared jeans high-waist jeans	mičo miki	 grenade mortar shell
SEEN LEFT ON SEEN	jeggings	maj	
HITCHED DITCHED BITCHED BINNED HIT AND MISSED WEDDING BLISSED	low-rise jeans mom jeans	mendi mihael	RP MERCURY 870 bomb heavy bomb
BLISS BLISS BLISS ASS KISS KISS KISS ASS KISS KISS KISS ASS	patchwork jeans ripped jeans	mojmir mojca	RP RUGER AMERICAN PREDATOR
SITUATIONSHIP SITUATIONSHIP SITUATIONSHIP	skinny jeans slim-fit jeans	 mark	 aircraft bomb
ASS-SESSED DO YOUR BEST OPPRESSED PRE-WEDDING STRESSED UNDRESSED SHOW BREAST CHERRY TEST	straight leg jeans wide leg jeans raw denim dry denim	marko darko miroslav	 free-fall bomb laser-guided bomb
SITUATIONSHIP SITUATIONSHIP SITUATIONSHIP	light wash medium wash	michael mohamed	depth charge cluster bomb
OPEN DOOR CLOSED DOOR OPEN RELATIONSHIP DEEP COMMITMENTSHIP IN RELATIONSHIP	dark wash acid wash	 nik niko	 rocket motor UN code class 1.3C 186

IN AN OPEN RELATIONSHIP	boyfriend jeans	nino	rocket with explosive warheads
SITUATIONSHIP SITUATIONSHIP SITUATIONSHIP		nikolas	code 181 explosive materials 477
BOYFRIEND	black denim grey denim white denim	nikola	artillery guns for artillery guns propellant
MARRIED ENGAGED		nika	
SINGLE		ožbolt	tactical vehicle tank ammunition
AND READY TO MINGLE			

(waiter enters. he puts hot chocolate with cream in front of lia.)

lia: thanks, miha.

waiter: and williams pear brandy for everyone. *(hands out the brandies.)*

magik meggi: thaaank youuuuuuuu.

waiter: girls ... um ... could we settle now ... if that's okay ...

(puts the bill on the table.)

eve: we might have another round, yeah?

waiter: we have to settle as we go, new policy ...

siren: what?

eve: you think we're not going to pay?

magik meggi: just put everything on the card.

waiter: we don't take cards.

magik meggi: oh gosh, I keep forgetting ...

lia: has the owner changed already?

waiter: about a month ago ...

eve: so this will turn into another bland old place, correct?

magik meggi: geez, eve ...

lia: will they keep the name?

waiter: we don't know anything yet.

eve: keeping the name is worse in my opinion. a total scam. they will market the place as something that people are used to, but hike the prices like everywhere else and just throw a bloody qr code menu on the table. so that they can change the prices every week. and then, they will charge so much that people just won't come here.

siren: will you stay?

waiter: if they'll have me.

eve: you'd actually stick around?

waiter: I hope if the prices go up, the wages will, too.

(siren hands him cash.)

waiter: will there be anything else?

siren: we're good for now, thanks.

magik meggi: *(to siren)* I'll send you my share through the app.

lia: same here.

(waiter leaves. eve follows him with her gaze.)

eve: sellout.

lia: it's a job, eve.

eve: it's all a job, yeah. with no room for principles.

(lia's phone rings. message tone, grabbing the attention of all four. lia looks at the phone with interest.)

magik meggi: who is it?

(lia puts the phone down. siren peeks at the screen.)

siren: hi, gorgeous! how are you? hope you had a good day, maybe even thought of me once or twice. love, gašper

eve: hang on, is this gašper? peter's mate?

magik meggi: yeah!

eve: is he the +1 from the "dinner with my mates"?

siren: yeah. but this message ... is truly a bit ...

magik meggi: what? a bit what?

siren: well, a bit ...

eve: cringe.

magik meggi: he's just being friendly.

lia: who gave him my number, you or you?

(magik meggi and siren look at one another. they stay silent.)

eve: I say it was meggi. because meggi, an engaged magik meggi, now wants all her mates paired off. single mates don't fit in with her future role of a married woman. siren, make sure you don't break up with dominik before meggi gets to the altar. hey meggi, if this happens ... will you be changing your mates?

magik meggi: I might decide to change you.

eve: can't wait.

magik meggi: what you're saying is not true at all.

eve: okay, if it's not true, why did you two set lia up with that +1?

siren: we only wanted the best for her. that's all, eve.

eve: this is why you fixed her up with a "surprise"?

siren: I really want things to change ... because ... she's still so caught up in her sadness over K ...

eve: okay, siren, maybe I believe that you meant well. but meggi – tell us why you did it?

magik meggi: precisely because of what siren said.

eve: meggi, meddling in other people's lives and trying to control them does not make you friendly, let alone an altruist.

(the sounds of the sea. the roaring of the waves.)

lia

A mermaid has no tears and therefore she suffers more.

But I cry like the rain, because I want my tears to make the sea where we got to know one another.

My sinuses are swollen and my sky's closing in.

I cry like the rain,

because it's clear that, after all this time,

you still haven't drained out of me.

I cry like the rain,

because it's clear that nothing will wash you off my skin.

I cry like the rain,

hoping this will flush you from my body.

I see you. I fall for you. I get kissed by you.

I have you.

You come and you go.

Each fairwell cuts me open.

I am frightened.

I am dead frightened that it may be our last.

Until the very last one, when it does not even cross my mind

I won't see you again.

Even hear you again.

And won't ever know what was real.

I love you.

Darling.

I love you.

When you said those words, you held me so tight

you almost cracked my ribs

and didn't let go when I told you it hurt

because you didn't believe me.

That your love could hurt me.

Already then, it crossed my mind this hug would be a metaphor for our relationship.

But you were sure I'd be the one to hurt you.
 You asked me why I never wrote of us.
 Never wrote of you.
 I told you I would write of you
 when you broke my heart.
 You said you wouldn't do that.

You said you were always the one
 who suffered in the end.
 I'm writing of you now.
 With swollen sinuses and my sky closing in.

magik meggi: we really don't want her to keep being sad over a summer love that happened to drag on into autumn.

eve: excuse me, no way is a triple date a good rebound. you don't rebound with a date, but with a good shag! maybe two, three, as many as it takes.

magik meggi: I'd say so, yeah.

eve: three good shags beat a triple date any day of the week.

siren: lia, would you rather eve took you out for a good shag?

lia: what's wrong with you all? do you even hear yourselves? no one needs to take me anywhere! although yeah, I'd rather have eve take me out for a "good shag". because at least she'd tell me upfront, not plot behind my back!

eve: true.

(the sounds of the sea. the roaring of the waves.)

magik meggi: I think you're being overly dramatic about the whole thing. you want us to say sorry for fixing you up and not telling you?

lia: you gave him my number, too, didn't you?

siren: it was peter actually.

magik meggi: siren?

lia: you're treating me like some 42-year-old divorcee. dumped and abandoned, someone who can't pick herself up and rebuild her life again after being left by her husband. and above all, someone whose life you see as conditioned by a relationship with a man. without a man, you see

her as automatically inferior to you. you see the key to her happiness in being with someone, because that'll make her more complete. because she is not enough for you as she is. you see her as a chipped, damaged, wrecked half. for you, she is incomplete, she always lacks him. the existence of her happiness is conditioned by him, some other person. the existence of her happiness is conditioned by you, some other people. that's why you lured her to the triple date dinner and kept her in the dark. the very moment when ... when ... when she ... she ... she ... tries to piece her body... thoughts... feelings together ... you sit her down at a table, out of all this love you have for her, expecting her to seduce a man, or to let him seduce her. so you can regard her as less miserable, less incomplete. and *(looks at siren)* less caught up in her sadness? because there's just no room for sadness in this world. she needs to be a perfect piece in your mosaic, not cracked, not wrecked. the piece that mustn't be broken.

siren: we did it because we care about you.

eve: no, siren, I think you did it because meggi wants all her besties paired off for her wedding. /

magik meggi: what the heck's up with you?

eve: just like peter's mates are. that's why you set her up with gašper, the only single mate peter's got.

lia: then, everyone's staring at me entire evening, at my reactions, my replies, my smiles or lack thereof ... because my performance conditions your success. my positive reaction means that your plan has worked. not to mention the engagement and peter's monologue on how to create successful long-term relationships and the type of man that women should select to succeed in love or get themselves hitched.

(peter enters, comes up to magik meggi, they kiss briefly on the lips, then he sits beside her. seated next to siren is dominik, her boyfriend. and next to lia, her +1, named gašper.)

eve: and where was this at?

magik meggi: it says on the invite.

eve: you couldn't just say it, could you?

siren: we were at the royal. the royal.

eve: of course, it's peter we're talking about.

(eve eagerly watches the action from outside, only popcorn's missing. what follows is a switching between two different times: one is the past event with peter, a reconstruction of the dinner as viewed and interpreted by lia; and all the other lines here and now, at the weird sister bar.)

peter: look, the thing is, a woman has to be able to accept the man. when a man has serious intentions, if he's a real man ... as meggi would say: husband material –

lia: at that moment, peter looked at gašper.

eve: your +1.

lia: "my" +1. sitting beside me at that moment. with dominik seated next to siren. cause this is a "triple" date. so, peter says: "husband material", glancing at gašper and then glancing at me.

peter: *(to lia)* ... if a man is "husband material", he'll want to give you everything. *(kisses magik meggi on the cheek)* the thing is, you need to know how to accept it. *(magik meggi kisses him back)* when he asks you out, to dinner, don't offer to go halves. instead of always striving for your emancipation ...

peter: instead of always striving for your emancipation, thank him nicely for dinner, tell him how good the food was and compliment him on his restaurant choice.

eve: what if the food was rubbish?

peter: a mature man doesn't need you to go halves. he's looking for a woman who he can make happy and who will appreciate what he offers her.

lia: complete and utter bullshit.

siren: it's not bullshit. it's natural for a man to take the lead. he courts, so he invites, picks the restaurant and pays. while you're sitting pretty, no need to deal with all this. a woman needs to save her energy.

lia: I don't think it's a problem going halves. eve?

eve: hwell ... if you ask me ... I always let guys pay.

lia: I don't. then I have a feeling I owe something. like I have to give something in return. we all know what that is.

siren: you can simply accept it.

eve: that's nonsense. you don't owe a thing to anyone. *you're* constantly buying products to make yourself look "pretty", I mean, even prettier. not him. we are the targets of consumer society, but still earn less than them. so yeah, he might as well pay if he wants to spend the evening staring at how hot you are. or put differently, let him pay for the valuable time you've spent with him and not working.

magik meggi: especially if he's the one to invite you, it's clear that he should pay.

lia: that may be. but today, for example, siren invited us here. why did you want to split the bill then?

magik meggi: hang on a minute. we're equals, we are.

eve: what??

lia: what the hell? what do you mean by that???

magik meggi: I'm just saying what peter wanted to say. give the man some space to be a gentleman.

siren: that's right, emancipation is not the death of chivalry.

peter: it may sound a bit old-fashioned, but every man wants a woman with a good self-image. not self-confidence, but self-image. they're not one and the same. self-confidence is what you do, and self-image is what you are.

below the surface

lia: I'm a musician, a singer, a pianist. ... an artist, if you like. a precarious worker, if you like. what I do is largely what I am. my job is not just a job. ... maybe the self-confidence at my job also influences my self-image. dunno ... maybe my job influences my whole life ... don't know ... I can't tell anymore. ... but I didn't say a word. although I really wanted to jump down his throat! is my value conditioned by the success of my work?

peter: the fact that you can accept his male role means that you are used to him making an effort for you. you like that, I hope that you do, and then you show him that you appreciate his efforts. that's how let you him close, so he can assess your level of self-image and see if you're the woman he'd want spend his life with. all he wants is to make you happy, and your response tells him if he has been successful.

eve: wow, what a perspective. it's not even about him making an effort for you, but about you being the one showing gratitude for his efforts.

magik meggi: that's basically the same thing.

eve: it's really not. not by far.

peter: make time for him when he asks you out. if you delay, he'll come to two conclusions: you're either too busy with your mates and career, or you're just not into him.

lia: it would be awesome if peter also advised me on when to go on that date. I have gigs in the evenings so that others can go on their dates.

peter: let him know that you're accessible and that you respect him. that you respect his lifestyle. that you believe in his career. and in him. which means that you support him in what he does. even when he's stressed. that you understand him. that you tolerate him. that you're patient. and that you're aware that he's basically doing all of this for you. his life goals are important for you, too, so you're rooting for them and thus him. in good times and in bad times. you support him. because after bad times, only good times can come. the rainbow comes after the rain, right?

(peter kisses magik meggi once again and leaves. eve looks at her besties in shock.)

eve: I get it. now, it's clear as day. why they kept *me* off the guest list.

magik meggi and siren: but we didn't!!!

lia: relax, eve, don't get worked up about it. no way was that mansplaining to a 42-year-old divorcee. surely not, why ever would they do such a thing. oh no, I know. actually, it was a beautiful altruistic act. straight from their hearts.

magik meggi: there you go, that's your problem exactly. comparing your seasonal (not to say summer) fling with years of marriage and seeing yourself as a 42-year-old divorcee.

eve: *(to lia)* I think he actually wants to shag you himself. but knows he can't.

magik meggi: what?

lia: what?

eve: what?

siren: relax, she's joking. you're joking, right?

eve: excuse me, I've never heard so much gobshite in my life. it's worse than menshealth.com and cosmopolitan put together. and you lot ... what do you do? I get it that you two didn't dare squeal, but you, lia, why didn't you say anything to him?

*(this bitter atmosphere is cut by the song **Sea Fairy (Morska vila)** by **Daleka obala**. that song. and no other. **K** comes on stage. along with Sea Fairy, Lia, and K, we dive into the memories of the summer love, the seasonal fling or romance, as you will.*

This is the kind of cringe that only my drunk noodle can come up with.

At the age of twenty-eight.

My drunk noodle is also a much better manifestor than my sober noodle.

As soon as I think of it, you turn towards me in the middle of a sleazy disco bar on the Croatian seaside.

In my drunken courage, I do not avert my gaze. You take off your sunglasses, stop them on your nose and gaze at me. I smile. Because I find those glasses on the dancefloor so funny.

And you come over.

*You take me by the hand and gesture me to come outside.
I look towards Eve, because of course I'm partying with her.
At least I think I look her way, where I last saw her dancing, but Eve is gone.
Eve's ditched me, she left without telling me where she was going.
Classic Eve.
According to Eve, it was me who ditched her.
Who ditched whom is still being debated.
I go. We go. Out of the seaside disco bar. Out. To the sea.*

*I don't know where Eve is,
I don't know your name,
but I know you're holding my hand,
asking me for a third time,
now I can hear you at last,
what my name is.*

*I tell you, you remember,
but for the next six months, you'll just call me:
darling. Darling. Darling.
I drag you away from the awful music
to the sandy beach
underneath the stars
into the sea.
Where we get to know one another.*

*I drag you off the beach
to your campsite
to the campsite showers
underneath a shower.
Where we get to know one another.*

*I drag you off the campsite
to the marina
to the small fishing boats
onto a boat.
Where we get to know one another.
Still no idea where Eve is,
she never called,
but I know that, at dawn,
on the small fishing boat
I fall asleep in your arms.*

(the song Sea Fairy by Daleka obala ends, along with the flashback. a joint polaroid of lia and K emerges. lia's phone rings. lia answers. K watches her for a while during the phone call, then leaves slowly.)

lia: hello? ... yeah ...

magik meggi: who is it, gašper?

eve: lol.

siren: meggi, I don't think she would pick up his call.

magik meggi: work stuff again, what else.

lia: when would we have it? ... three hours on tuesday? ... and three on wednesday? ...

eve: is it the producer?

(lia shakes her head.)

lia: tuesday I need to check, but wednesday's scheduled. two rehearsals, you sure? ... four new songs? ... one is without me. ... how early do we have to get there on thursday? ... okay, cool, that'll work, yeah. ... can you pick me up? ... brilliant, thanks. ... yeah, I'll let you know about tuesday. *(hangs up the phone)* dear meggi, congratulations on your engagement!

siren: to the engagement! and to the weird sister! and to all our /

eve: hold on, the weird sister deserves a round of its own!

lia: to meggi!

(they toast with the williams pear brandies and down them)

siren: eeewwww ... I forgot how that ... burns ...

eve: *(yells to the waiter)* miha! one more round, darling!

siren: tea for me!

magik meggi: and for us? brandy first, regrets later?

eve: I'm always up for it!

lia: so ... who gets the honour to be your maid of honour?

magik meggi: what do you mean who?

siren: I'm her maid of honour.

eve: who else, the only one in a relationship. stick to dominik like glue!

magik meggi: siren and I thought we'd have the hen party in spring.

lia: this year?

siren: yeah.

lia: and when's the wedding?

magik meggi: 12. october.

lia: this year??

magik meggi: yup!

eve and lia: are you pregnant?

magik meggi: nope.

eve: why such a rush all of a sudden, after nine years?

below the surface

magik meggi: ... oh gosh ... I haven't told it to anyone like this. ... no, not even my mates. ... besties. when they asked me why such a rush all of a sudden ... I really didn't have the energy for that talk. ... because they would have judged me. ... yes, they are true friends. ... okay, maybe judged is the wrong word. they wouldn't have understood ... we do not see eye to eye in some matters ... and peter ... peter ... he ... I would have even given up my voice for him ... but none of them could get that ...

siren: meggi's been waiting for this ever since she wanted to do her master's in London.

lia: I'd never go for an october wedding. getting married in autumn. that's like all you've got to look forward to in your marriage is winter.

eve: that's how it is anyway.

siren: hence the hen party in spring! when something new's being born!

magik meggi: *(to lia)* so, you do imagine getting married one day?

(waiter comes.)

waiter: I brought four all the same. and your tea.

eve: alright!

waiter: I heard you're celebrating. congrats, meggi.

magik meggi: thanks, miha darling! (*shows off the ring.*)

waiter: blimey, that's a rock and a half!

magik meggi: yeah, that's my peter for you.

waiter: well, congrats, congrats!

siren: shall we settle?

waiter: this one's on me.

lia: oh don't be daft ...

waiter: it used to be on the house, now it's on me, last day and all. for meggi.

magik meggi: ooooh thanks, miha, you are such a darling!

(waiter leaves.)

siren: to our darling miha and to the weird sister!

eve: to the weird sister and its loo, when meggi puked before the freshers' party even started!

siren: at half past eight!

lia: with me holding her hair back!

magik meggi: to the weird sister and the morning when siren and me went for a shot before the maths test!

siren: and mine was a shoot-out fail.

lia: shot – shoot!

eve: and us two had shoot – shot!

lia: to the weird sister and to the lunch break when eve and I had a spliff and then climbed to the very top of the pole at PE, stoned out of our heads!

eve: we got A's!

magik meggi: the only ones who made it to the top!

eve: we got A's!

lia: haze for A's!

siren: to the weird sister and all our interventions here! especially to / the marathon intervention!

magik meggi: the marathon intervention!

eve: which one's that?

magik meggi: eeeve?

lia: fuck, don't remind me.

eve: which one was it?

magik meggi: when all of us skipped uni for a day

siren: I missed a mid-term exam

lia: sorry, soorryy, soorryyy

eve: aaah, when rok dumped lia?

magik meggi and siren: duuuuh!

lia: baaad ...

eve: we were here for 12 hours straight!

magik meggi and siren: the marathon intervention!

lia: enough now ... just make it ... to the weird sister!

eve, magik meggi, siren: to the weird sister!

3. capital

3.1

eve, siren, lia loaded down with backpacks, mats, sleeping bags, banners ...

siren: *(excited)* we're on a boycott, can you believe it!

eve: it's not a boycott, it's a take-over. a squat. squatting.

siren: alright, eve ... we're on a squat, can you believe it!

lia: eve, how long is this gonna take?

eve: until the university takes a stance. as long as it takes!

lia: I can sleep here today, but I have a gig tomorrow evening.

eve: you could cancel your gig. or come back after. or have a benefit gig.

lia: someone organise a benefit gig for me, please.

siren: there are students everywhere you look!

eve: what do you mean?

lia: we might be a little old ...

siren: rubbish. I'm saying they're cute!

eve: you're never too old for squatting.

lia: of course not, mrs. student meal vouchers at twenty-eight.

siren: oi!

eve: hungry with envy, are you?

3.1

magik meggi and peter at home in bed, wearing their pajamas. peter is working on the computer, meggi is scrolling on her phone. disturbed by the loud tiktok sounds, peter reaches to meggi's phone and turns down the volume. after a while, meggi turns it back up a bit. peter gets up and gets her headphones. meggi puts them on.

siren: I brought a kettle and some nice teabags.

eve and lia: cheers, grandma.

3.2.

peter: here we go again.

magik meggi: what's up?

peter: can't you hear it?

magik meggi: *(listens, hears some creaking and banging from the other side of the wall.)*
it'll pass.

peter: they're like animals, they should move to the forest!

magik meggi: it's not ten yet.

peter: it's five to. people want some peace when they come home.

magik meggi: how was work?

peter: fine.

magik meggi: no conflicts?

peter: no.

magik meggi: you sure?

peter: meggi, I don't want to talk about this at home, too.

magik meggi: you usually do.

peter: well, not today I don't.

magik meggi: you're tense.

peter: no, I'm peter.

(meggi laughs at his dumb joke and hugs him.)

3.3

*lia, siren and eve put up a big banner
"people's lives before capital".*

eve: can this guy speak! *(claps.)*

eve: people's lives first!

siren and lia: people's lives first!

eve: before capital! *(applauds.)*

siren and lia: before capital!

(both clap.)

lia: *(looking at her phone)* I'll have to go tomorrow morning. I'm meeting those folks for the wedding.

eve: screw the meeting.

lia: right, screw grown-up life.

siren: can't you try and reschedule it?

lia: I did. no can do.

eve: a couple of deans and the university chancellor are coming tomorrow morning.

lia: I can't just quit my job over that.

eve: I thought you are an artist. with some principles.

siren: for fuck's sake, eve ...

lia: eve, give us a break, will you. I even missed my dad's 60th.

(siren serves tea to lia and eve.)

eve: in one hand, you have people's lives, and your job in the other. which one do you choose?

lia: lives of course. but I don't know if my being here can really help them or just costs me my income, which I really need right now.

siren: what you'd need first is the belief that it *can* help them. you are just a tiny piece of the big puzzle, slowly turning into a mass, piece by piece. that mass can move something. but if the pieces don't connect, if everyone wanders around doing their own thing, then no, we can't be of any help.

lia: when's your work tomorrow, siren?

siren: well, in the afternoon. but I'll come back in the evening.

lia: what if you had it in the morning?

silence.

3.4

peter: fancy ordering some chinese?

magik meggi: they're probably closed by now.

peter: fuck this sorry ass town. with only bloody burek stores open. no one wants to work.

magik meggi: let people get some sleep at night, peter.

peter: I don't get any sleep at night either. want some burek pie?

magik meggi: I'm not hungry. ... there's dumplings in the freezer.

peter: from your mum?

magik meggi: from spar.

peter: hm, not sure I'm hungry at all.

magik meggi: shall I cook them for you?

peter: nah, I'll get some burek.

magik meggi: now?

peter: would you like some, too?

magik meggi: I've already brushed my teeth.

3.5

siren, eve and lia are setting up camp – placing their sleeping bags in a semicircle, with cups and a kettle in the middle like a fire. a scene that resembles a squat or a camp.

siren: eve, who's the guy you've had your horny eyes on the entire time.

eve: whoever do you mean?

(lia gives her a "stop playing dumb" look.)

siren: the one in the red t-shirt. I can literally feel your electricity.

eve: oh him ... he gave the speech earlier.

siren: I saw that, yeah. who is he?

eve: he's from uni. a PhD student.

lia: oh my! a PhD student of all the things to see!

eve: yes. he's writing a doctorate in international law.

lia: wow, how do you know about that?

eve: could you please stop staring at him?

lia: okay, my eyes are closed.

siren: so you know each other?

3.5

(peter leaves. meggi keeps scrolling. at first, we can hear the sound of various reels, then she starts watching an instagram video. as the scene continues, a monologue from the video can be partially heard from the background.

We, the students of the Faculty of Social Sciences, demand from the Faculty of Social Sciences and the University of Ljubljana to clearly condemn Israel committing genocide in Gaza. Our allies in NATO and the European Union supply firearms, tanks, cannons, bombs intended to destroy apartment buildings and the civilian infrastructure! This makes us responsible, too. For this reason, we, the students of the University of Ljubljana, demand that any collaboration with Israeli universities and companies be terminated. We demand that people's lives be put first! Before business deals

eve: yeah, that's mark. we wrote that speech together.

siren: maaaaaaaaaarrk!

lia: hang on, you let a guy take credit for something that you wrote?

eve: omg, lia, it's not all about business and copyright.

siren: I think the point here's something else, not who the author is.

eve: exactly! thank you, siren!

lia: still, it would have been nice if you'd been part of it, giving the speech.

eve: then, people could get ideas.

lia: I knew it!

siren: ideas? what ideas?

eve: nothing, forget it.

siren: lia?

lia: oh come on eve, just say it.

siren: omg! what am I missing? what am I missing? what am I missing? what am I missing? lia ... lia ... lia ... what aaam I miiissing ...

eve: nothing.

lia: they've had a boink or two. they're having a blast because he's practically eve in male form. when I once asked him if he'd call himself a socialist, he said no. adding that he sees himself more as a marxist.

siren omg! marxist mark!

*and capital accumulation!
We demand
that people's lives
be put first!
Before capital!*

lia: omg, exactly! but eve being eve ...

siren: good grief, eve ... can we stop being so high school?

eve: *(to lia)* at school, they taught us how to have safe sex. but no one taught us how to love safely. *(to siren)* so: no.

lia: have you been reading my high school poetry?

eve: whoa! tmi!

3.6.

(peter returns, finishing a burek and carrying a bag with another one.)

peter: meggi, meggi.

(she ignores him.)

peter: meggi, want some burek?

magik meggi: nah.

peter: you don't want spinach burek?

meggi: *(excited)* is it fresh?

(he gives her the burek.)

magik meggi: this is worth cleaning my teeth again.

peter: gimme a bite.

magik meggi: nooo ...

(magik meggi and peter eat burek together.)

magik meggi: the girls are at the squat.

peter: what squat?

magik meggi: at the Faculty of Social Sciences. it must have been eve's idea. but she said nothing to me.

peter: would you have gone?

3.7

eve, lia and siren are getting ready to spend the night in their sleeping bags.

lia: do you think meggi will ask me to play at her wedding or should I offer it myself?

siren: what? are you seriously thinking about performing there?

lia: um ... yeah. why?

siren: it'll just be all work for you again.

lia: but I'd be very happy to do it.

siren: then, it's best to make it your wedding present.

lia: this would make it a very expensive wedding present ...

siren: you'd charge her?

lia: well, yeah. it's my job after all.

siren: it is, but she's your mate.

(eve sneaks off in silence with her sleeping bag.)

lia: who will you be there for if not your mates?

magik meggi: no.

peter: it doesn't matter then.

magik meggi: will you be bellyaching less now, with a full belly?

peter: have you ever thought about putting tomatoes in dumplings, instead of them apricots or strawberries ... cherry tomatoes?

magik meggi: no, peter, I haven't?

peter: wouldn't that be awesome? savoury balls of goodness? with a cherry tomato, some rosemary and basil. so ... a variant of focaccia. but so much better.

magik meggi: long live balls of goodness.

siren: yes, but isn't it a bit weird if your mate pays you? for her wedding of all things?

lia: she could pay someone else?

siren: yeah, someone who's not her mate.

lia: my point exactly.

lia and siren: eve?

(eve is gone. lia and siren glance at each other. they look around.)

lia: can you see mark anywhere?

siren: he's gone, right?

lia: yup, he's gone. I can't believe that I agreed to sleep on the bloody floor of the faculty of social sciences, in this mass of students. to wake up sore and sleep-deprived for tomorrow's meeting. just so eve can free-flow around.

siren: I was so looking forward to our sleepover ... like in the good old days ...

lia: maybe you could call dominik to come get us?

siren: I really thought this squat of eve's means something to her.

lia: it does in a way.

3.8

(dimmed light. magik meggi and peter back in bed. ready for sleep. almost. meggi snuggles close to peter under the duvet. peter stays still.)

magik meggi: spoon.

(silence. magik meggi wiggles under the duvet.)

magik meggi: come spoon me.

(silence) hello big spoon, little spoon here.

peter: *(laughs)* good evening little spoon, big spoon is asleep.

magik meggi: my dear big spoon, something down there is very awake.

(peter turns his back to magik meggi.)

magik meggi: so much about keeping your woman happy.

peter: didn't I propose to you just the way you wanted?

magik meggi: thank you. ever so much.

peter: and what did your mates say to the engagement?

magik meggi: peter, we haven't had any sex since we got engaged.

peter: it's the middle of the night, let me get some sleep.

magik meggi: no. I want you in my vagina and I want you now.

peter: it's a weekday, I've got work tomorrow.

magik meggi: last time we had sex was for christmas.

peter: yeah, it was the holidays.

magik meggi: so now I should wait until labour day or something?

peter: isn't that when you're having your hen party?

(silence.)

peter: meggi, don't take it personally, I'm tired, I have a tough day ahead, I need to get some sleep. sorry.

(silence.)

magik meggi: there's always a tough day ahead. and then, there's the weekend and you're tired from the tough week behind.

peter: well sorry for working, for trying to put something together. for you as well.

magik meggi: sorry that I can't sync my cycle with your job and sorry that I always ovulate exactly when your stress hits the fan. next time, I'll ask my libido to check your schedule first.

peter: look, it's just till the end of the year, please hold out till the end of the year. it will be different then.

magik meggi: what if things only get worse?

peter: what things?

magik meggi: your schedule for one.

3.9

siren and lia have packed up their sleeping gear.

siren: he's picking us up at the bus stop on dunajska street.

lia: siren, do you think I'm a bad musician?

siren: what? where did that come from?

lia: well, you obviously don't want me to play at meggi's wedding.

siren: no, lia, it's not that. I just want, at least then, all four of us together. not you working, not eve disappearing again. but us truly together.

3.10

(magik meggi, wearing black lace, is straddling peter, who's still in his pajamas.)

magik meggi: tell me what's going on! I want to know exactly why you're nervous, why you're popping xanax again and why you won't sleep with me?

peter: xanax helps me fall asleep, alright? but you're preventing me from it. thanks a lot.

magik meggi: no, peter, not true, not true at all. you've been weird all day, you get all worked up by the neighbours, you take a walk in the middle of the night, supposedly for burek, you smell like an ashtray, you pop xanax.

peter: obviously, even getting some burek is a crime now.

magik meggi: not the point, peter, not the point.

peter: let's talk about this tomorrow, okay?

magik meggi: you don't need to marry me, you know.

(magik meggi climbs off peter and lies down next to him, covering herself with the duvet. she turns away. they are both still for a while. silence. peter gets out of bed. he gets his phone and shows the screen to meggi. meggi takes the phone and reads.)

magik meggi: fuck. ... why does it have to be you of all the people?

peter: boss's orders.

magik meggi: you literally have a hundred people under you.

peter: I do, but it needs to be someone from the top.

magik meggi: and what are you going to say to the press?

peter: we will decide tomorrow morning at the meeting.

(peter takes the phone from magik meggi and puts it away. he lies down next to her, covering both with the duvet. they spoon. peter is the small spoon, magik meggi the big one. they get

still. peter closes his eyes. magik meggi looks into the distance, giving it a death stare.)

4. self-work

eve, lia and magik meggi in leggings and sports tops. they are carrying out guided exercises on their gym mats. there is a trainer on the other side of the hall, leading the workout. the song training season by dua lipa is playing.

magik meggi: I'm abooooout to diiiieeee ...

lia: the first five times are hard, but then it gets easier.

magik meggi: fuuuuuckkk ...

eve: be warned. you won't be able to climb any stairs tomorrow.

lia: make that a week.

magik meggi: I can't believe I'm paying for this sufferiiiiing ...

eve: we'll sort out a student discount for you.

magik meggi: I haven't been a student for three years.

lia: eve's fake student ids make it 70% cheaper.

eve: I'll make one for you, too, if you join us.

magik meggi: um ... I'll have peter pay this for me.

lia: why's that?

magik meggi: just because.

eve: good point. have him pay for us, too.

lia: *(to magik meggi)* you're doing this for yourself, right?

magik meggi: yeah of course, myself of course. I also buy five different night creams, three different good morning creams, two more creams with spf, then there's cleansing milk, cleansing gel and cleansing water to wash all this off, plus moisturising cream, aloe vera and hydration spray for under the foundation, plus foundation itself, foundation remover, oil-based mascara remover and special cleanser ... with anti-cellulite massage, anti-cellulite gel, anti-cellulite peeling, anti-cellulite cream, collagen, msm, retinol serum, retinol booster, herbiotics ...

magik meggi: fuuuuuuuuuckkkkk ...

eve: meggi, what's wrong?

lia: what's the matter?

magik meggi: what? why? how could anything be the matter?

eve: dunno ... have your lives changed in some way? ... after the engagement?

below the surface

(lia keeps exercising. eve and magik meggi along with her. however, lia takes us into a completely different place. to another type of self-work.)

lia: I feel ashamed. maybe scared, too. of myself. but more ashamed. I'm ashamed of two things right now. for one, that I was afraid to come here for so long. because I was afraid that I would find out something about myself that I would not be able to accept. or would have to work on. in addition to all other things. the other thing, which I'm even more ashamed of, is that I came here because I clearly think there's something wrong with me. something that needs changing. so I can be better. just like I told you on the phone ... I decided to invest in myself a little. literally. how else will I spend my money if not on investing in myself. right? I am also in a slight predicament that this here could turn out to be a waste of money, so please, don't you screw me over as well. but I've brought myself here even if I really don't want to be here. see, that's already one of those ... rows? quarrels I keep having with myself?

one of them is that I'd like to be free, but loved as well. I like being in love, too, but I always get trapped in it somehow. this makes me think I look for dudes I can't really be with, just to keep myself safe from getting trapped. I know what you're going to say – that I should rank my values, right? will freedom still come first? I'm afraid it will. I know one can find freedom in another person, too. lol? when I say these words, I feel I'm lying. you know, I don't have any addictions, I don't smoke, don't drink coffee, rarely drink alcohol. my only addiction could be that I love falling for guys. but I can't bring myself to trusting someone, letting myself go. or even to believing that this person will take care of me. because that takes my freedom away. maybe I have a fear of commitment?

recently, at an after-party at two in the morning, there was this debate. I was the only single girl and the other six all in relationships. I tried to explain that I couldn't picture being dependent on someone. and then one of them – we're talking strong, independent women with careers, not mere financial dependants, I don't have such mates at all – she says to me I just have to trust the man enough where I could depend on him.

this statement came crushing down after me saying that, if I were a loser in life, I'd rather stay dependent on my parents, where I truly feel safe, than depend on some dude. does this mean that, maybe, I still haven't grown up yet? it honestly feels as though I grew up so suddenly. and that there's something wrong with me now that I'm grown up. that everyone around me is further along than me. peter and meggi, for instance ... those two are proper grown-ups. maybe my parents should have ghosted me, so I'd be forced to grow up into a couple? or I could simply be driven into it for financial reasons? couldn't I? maybe my parents are the only people that I really

trust? although I'd rather not depend on anyone. I work so hard on being independent. on being the one in control. that's where my freedom lies. pardon? if I'm afraid to trust people?

... so ... um ... I keep waking up ... for the last six months ... several times a night. ... I can hear everything ... the neighbours. ... I don't know what gives them the right to make noise in the middle of the night anyway ... it's so infuriating that my sleep is conditioned by others! next, I panic that I'll stay awake, that I won't be productive during the day if I stay awake, and I feel some kind of ... rock on my chest. no falling asleep after that! some people can ghost their feelings. not me though. *(K appears in the space.)* every time I write, I ask myself if this is my deformity – that my feelings hurt me so much that I have to pour them out on paper? ... what kind of feelings? ... humiliation.

(lia stops exercising. she looks at K. they make eye contact. then, K leaves the space. lia is back in the same physical and mental space with eve and magik meggi, who are still exercising. lia starts looking at her phone.)

eve: dunno ... have your lives changed in some way? ... after the engagement?

magik meggi: why ever would our lives change after the engagement? I mean, yeah ... it's kinda maybe even more beautiful. we're making all our wedding plans together. we're planning things together, and somehow we've become connected in a whole new way. like this relationship has reached the next level. connection. dependence. codependence.

eve: how come you decided to join us at boot camp?

magik meggi: how come? so I'll be the best version of myself on my wedding day.

lia: *(with phone in hand)* omg! omg! omg! good news! the producer has emailed me back.

eve: omg! what did he say?

lia: he wants us to meet in person! actually ... this afternoon if I 'm available?

eve: omg! you rule! shoot – shoot! *(lia and eve do their little hand greeting)*

lia: shoot – shot! *(lia picks up her exercise mat.)* this is it, this could be it! talk later! *(leaves.)*

magik meggi: what's this about the producer?

eve: for the album. lia's written enough songs for a whole album.

magik meggi: omg, is she releasing an album?

eve: let's keep our fingers crossed, yeah!

magik meggi: omg, does she mention us?

eve: it's mostly about K.

magik meggi: oh well, who else.

eve: lia turns even the greatest pain into a product.

magik meggi: I hope I can become an awesome product out of this pain, too.

soothing music. dua lipa's song has long ended. the kind of music you hear at the spa. the kind you choose for meditation. or for yoga. the kind you hear at the massage. in addition to the soothing instruments, we can also hear the waves. the sea.

siren:

(not delivering the text by heart, but reading it from the dramatic text in her hand)

siren isn't in this scene. in the fourth scene. at first, she was supposed to be in a parallel action, doing yoga, meditating ... relaxing. but that would mean she'd have to work again, on stage. the direction of additional focuses would be required, along with many more rehearsals for the actress. also, directing scenes with multiple actors is more exhausting than directing those with fewer.

this scene meant a rehearsal or two less for siren, and she is actually resting backstage during it. which is also the most in line with her character. siren saves her energy to use it for something else. siren protects her body to use it for something else.

I may be on stage right now, but it's still easier to read this than rehearse a group scene. because there is a lot more dependence, codependence, in that case. above all though, a solo scene rehearsal is a lot easier to organise.

don't get me wrong, there is also something beautiful about stage codependence from the fellow actors. with the fellow actresses and actor she can rely on, siren prefers sharing the stage with them to being there alone.

sometimes, it's worth investing your energy into not being alone. this is what I wanted to tell you. and to express my appreciation for your time and energy, which enabled us to be together here this evening. thank you.

5. bride to be

eve and siren are decorating a room. at siren's place. a pretty, bright, large space with flowers, light-colour furniture, a yellow armchair and a ton of colours radiating positive energy. they blow up pink balloons and hang paper lanterns, one by one. the action continues for some time. the room slowly turns pink, baloon by baloon. lantern by lantern. no, too close. yes, over there. everything needs to look pretty! this is paramount to siren, and makes her nervous accordingly.

siren: I'd love to see these ribbons hanging over the armchair. let's have her sit there when she's answering these questions. it'll make a nice frame for the video.

eve: do you and dominik ever have sex on this armchair?

siren: what would you say?

eve: no.

siren: why ever not?!

eve: so, it's a yes then?

siren: yes, oh yess! it's so good.

eve: in what position?

siren: it's really good if I face down like this and he is at the other side of the armrest.

eve: does it make you come faster?

siren: um ... not really.

eve: does it make him come later?

siren: dominik is in pretty good shape, you know.

eve: why then?

siren: it flows into me better.

eve: hahah, tell that to meggi when she sits down on the fuck chair.

siren: no, no, no, please, don't mention that to her.

eve: relax, I won't.

siren: seriously, don't. she'll be mad at me because I never told her.

eve: hang on ... told her what?

siren: never mind, forget I ever said anything. and not a word to her. it's not what it looks like, it's just that ...

(a period of awkward silence.)

eve: want some gin?

siren: no, I'm good for now. put these balloons. around the place. will you, eve.

(siren is making a drink for eve. another bout of silence.)

eve: I find this whole thing so ... over the top.

siren: the hen party?

eve: no, this could well be the only fun part. the wedding. all that hype and pressure and expectations. of course, it's all centred on the woman as usual. I bet peter didn't go to boot camp.

siren: boot camp?

eve: meggi's joined us at boot camp.

siren: meggi?

eve: yeah. suddenly, she's more fit than me and lia combined. it's a bit fucked up really.

siren: it must be pre-wedding stress. yes, she's definitely in pre-wedding stress. pre-wedding stress. stress. that's why she hasn't picked up her phone all day. that's it. she must be a nervous wreck. but where's lia?! has lia got the t-shirt? lia's got the t-shirt, right?

eve: yeah, she's got it.

siren: where the heck is she? honestly. we might as well have meggi come before her.

(doorbell rings.)

siren: better be lia or else ...

(siren opens the door.)

lia: heeeeeeeey! so so so sorry I'm late! I had to finish something!

siren: have you got the t-shirt?

lia: *(reaches into her bag and pulls out a white t-shirt with "bride to be" printed on it)*
tadaaaaaaaah!

siren: oh wooow!

eve: and this is what took you so long?

lia: no, no, no, there was something else I had to finish.

eve: did the producer get in touch?

lia: no. it's not that.

eve: what then?

lia: it's a surprise!

siren: oh come ooon!

eve: tell us!

lia: how's mark the marxist, eve?

eve: look what I found at the bargain shop! *(goes to her bag and takes out balloons. she starts blowing one up, revealing a phallic shape.)*

lia: omg!

siren: no, no, no, no ... meggi said no dicks.

eve: that's not a dick, that's a monster dong!

lia: just one! for meggiiii! for old meggiiii!

siren: knock it off, have some sense of aesthetics ...

lia: dicks can be beautiful too.

eve: mario's dick was absolutely gorgeous. and matej's and martin's weren't that bad either.

lia: what about mark's?

eve: hwell ... kinda ... average.

siren: has anyone been in your pants whose name didn't start with "m"?

eve: according to my statistics, guys with names starting with "m" have the most beautiful dicks. their length and girth are perfectly proportionate.

siren: good grief, eve, you can't categorise people like that.

eve: even so, we all agree that if it's really short or really thick, it's disproportionate. mind you, better thick and short than thin and long.

lia: yes, fine! where can we hang the moonster dooong, siiiren?

eve: dong! dong! dong! (*waving the balloon.*)

siren: give it a reeest, meggi really said ...

lia: miss maid of honour, will you please allow it, just one, just one!

eve: pleeeeeeease!

lia and eve: please, please, please.

siren: if lia tells us what her surprise is! and if you tell us what kind of dick the doctorand has? and what happened with him!

eve: I already said it was average.

siren: average thick or average long?

eve: average boring.

lia: ouch.

siren: but you really liked him? as a person?

eve: can I tell lia though?

siren: what?

eve: what I can't tell meggi.

lia: what can't you tell meggi?

siren: eve, leave it alone, will you.

eve: why? it's lia.

lia: siren?

siren: but seriously, don't tell meggi. I'll tell her ... but haven't planned to just yet ... especially not today of all days!

lia: yes, yes, I won't! I swear. pinky promise.

eve: well?

siren: dominik and I are trying for a baby.

lia: oh! alright ... but you're not pregnant yet?

siren: noooo! I'll take it easy on the drinking, though ...

lia: right, I see ... why?

siren: well ... I'm putting my body first.

lia: okay. sure ... your body, your choice.

siren: yes, thank you. what about your surprise?

lia: ummmm ... my surprise ... well ... is not as huge as yours ... I, er ... I wrote a song.

siren: pardon?

lia: I wrote a song for meggi.

siren: whaaaat? omg!

eve: oh, wow!

siren: can we hear it?

lia: ummmm ... the balloon first!

eve: the monster dong!

(they hang up the phallic-shaped balloon among the others. they start mucking around. eve pretends to give it a blowjob, with lia throwing confetti as if it's ejaculating. siren puts up a cocktail umbrella to shield eve from the confetti. they are having a laugh and throwing confetti at each other.)

(doorbell.)

lia: who could that be?

siren: maybe one of the girls came early.

(siren opens the door.)

siren: meggi!

(lia and eve exchange looks.)

lia: where is the bride to be??

*(lia quickly grabs the bride to be t-shirt.)
(meggi enters slowly.)*

lia: meggiiii, we haven't quite finished yet ...

magik meggi: I've seen them all. ... all 27 missed calls. ... and your texts. ... and I really hope there's strawberry vodka in the house. ... because ... because, yeah, strawberry vodka ... was what we first got drunk on. *(fighting tears, trying to maintain composure)* and ... I puked ... at the weird sister ... at half past eight.

siren: there is strawberry vodka.

magik meggi: yes! yes! yes! ... *(looks around the room and at the decorations.)* wow! *(fighting tears. siren signals to eve to remove the phallic-shaped balloon.)* you've really gone out of your way ... for me. *(starts breathing heavily.)* now that I know there's strawberry vodka, I know it was the right choice for me to come. ... because ... I wondered all day if I should come at all. ... and ... all I wanted was to see you lot. ... although coming here would also mean seeing the balloons and the glitter and ... *(looks toward the bride to be shirt.)* ... *(hangs down her head. takes a deep breath.)* ... it's over.

siren: meggi, what's going on?

(meggi breathing deeply.)

lia: want some water?

siren: get some water.

magik meggi: the wedding's off. but since I'm already here, we might as well have a party, right? water, really! get me some vodka! strawberry, of course!

siren: what?

eve: what the hell?

siren: *(looking at the decorations)* what? it's off? meggi?

magik meggi: strawberry vodka double quick!

siren: it's stress. no more, no less. it's stress. it's just pre-wedding stress.

(lia sits down next to meggi and hugs her.)

eve: I'll go and fuck him up!

(goes furiously towards the exit.)

siren: waaaaiit! *(holds eve back.)* this is nonsense. these are pre-wedding jitters. this can be all sorted out.

magik meggi: are we out of strawberry vodka or something? lia, why don't you fetch some?
(meggi starts shaking, lia tries to hold her.)

eve: I'm gonna fuuuuck him uuuup!

(siren holds eve. eve tries to break free from her grasp.)

eve: did he cheat on you? did he? I'll castrate eeeevery bloke on the planet!

(eve breaks free, goes to the inflated phallus and pops it. she grabs a nearby pair of scissors and goes for the door. the door is blocked by siren, who's just locked it and taken the key. eve goes at the hanging balloons with her scissors and pops a few more. meggi starts watching what's happening and tries to hold back her laughter.)

eve: bloody dickheads, whoring around!

siren: I'm sure something can be done.

magik meggi: it's over and done alright. he's off to India. for 12K a month. for 3 years. his salary doubles each year. I'll have my strawberry vodka now, if you don't mind.

PART TWO

6. rock of solitude

lights

colours

body

dances

alone

music

body

for itself

lights

colours

body

dances

for itself

music

body

for itself

lights

music

colours

dances

for itself

body

dances

for itself

lights

body

dances

alone

rhythm

colours

dances

alone

body

colours

rhythm

chances

dances

body

dances

alone

"With the rise of brutal neoliberalism, which, along the lines of Margaret Thatcher that "there is no such thing as society", divided us into lonely individuals, we hunger that much more for vanished communities. A telling testimonial to the state of society is also the way we dance to popular music: since the sixties, marked by an attempt to dismantle traditional gender roles and a growth of individualism, we have been dancing by ourselves, no longer in couples as we used to. Like hippies, ravers, too, strove to connect individuals into one community, one long-lost tribe, one loving humanity."¹

dances *body*
alone

alone

alone

alone

eve: people's lives first!

magik meggi: *(with British accent)* bride to be

eve: before capital!

magik meggi: *(with London accent)* or not to be

eve: people's lives first!

¹ Dijana Matković, *Why I Don't Write*, 2021.

magik meggi: *(if she had gone to London)* bride to be

eve: before capital!

magik meggi: *(if she had put herself first)* or not to be

eve: people's lives first!

magik meggi: bride to be or not to be

dances *body*
alone

eve: do you know that, as a consumer, as a user, it is much more convenient for you to get apple music through apple family sharing than just by yourself. if you are by yourself, the monthly subscription fee is three times higher than if you are part of the apple family plan.

body *dances*
alone

eve: student menu: 5.99 dollars per month. price for adult going solo: 10.99 dollars per month. and price for apple family: 16.99 dollars per month! and the 16.99 dollars per month can be split between five members of your lovely apple family. instead of 10.99 dollars, it just costs you 3.4 dollars per month.

dances *body*
alone

eve: not because apple would believe in family, or in community for that matter! no, no business will ever believe in business. no! they do believe in business. no business will ever believe in community! no business will ever believe in community! no business will ever believe in community! here's why: because they want you to invite your friends to the apple family sharing, which means more apple subscribers in the end! here's why. you can have apple family and apple music even if without an iphone. so you have apple music first, and later on ... here's why ... here's why ... iphone. ... here's why ... iphone! ... here's why. iphone! ... here's why. iphone! here's why. ... i ... i ... I ... I ... I

dances *body*

eve: *(beats on her chest with her fists as if drawing attention to herself)* I, I, I, I, I, I, aye, aye, aye, I, I, I!

alone

eve: i fucking shite!

alone

alone

alone

alone

alone

alone

magik meggi: I hate him and his stupid faith. Faith! hah! Faith! Faith in that marvellous Biznizman. and there's more. Faith in the Biznizman and ... and ... and ... the Podkaster. yeah! Faith in the Podkaster! In the Podkaster, who spreads his wisdom, in the Podkaster, who teaches how to invest wisely and manage your energy and time. our time! this time! and this Biznizman and Podkaster, he teaches, spreads his wisdom how a patent can fix a company so that workers get as efficient as possible as fast as possible. as fast as possible! so that they can have time to rest. time to rest! because time, that's our biggest treasure! no one can give us time back. and no no money is worth as much as time. so we have to save it. fuuuuck! fuuuuck! fuuuuck! in the same piddling podcast, he also says that love ... yes, love is the best thing in this materialistic world ... because it's free. love is free! nine years! nine marvellous years! nine fucking years! you think that's free??? eh, Mr. Biznizman and Podkaster? nine years is free! free! where is your Faith in time-saving now? Faith in the Podkaster!

alone

alone

on itself

into itself

for itself

siren: siren grew up in a large family with two sisters and a brother. siren is the third child and the second daughter. her sister is four years older, her brother two years, and her other sister three years younger. they lived in a suburb of ljubljana. the public transport between the suburb and the city was quite terrible. so all four kids passed their driving test quite quickly. the family had two cars. one was mum's and one was dad's. but the kids started using one more than the other. when they all reached their twenties, they had to share the car for going out and enjoying the vibrant city nightlife with their peers. this took a lot of communication and compromising between the three sisters and the brother. furthermore, they also hung out a lot as they'd often drive together, or one would wait for the other and joined the other's friends. of course, they argued every now and then. when the oldest sister bought her own car and the four shared two cars, this meant less compromising and fewer arguments, but also less communication and less time hanging out.

body

dances

alone

siren: hey, lia! lia! liiiiiiaaaaaa!!!! has it ever crossed your mind that our generation has the most means of communication but the least ability to communicate?

lia: here's the thing ... this ghosting. fucking ghosting. you know what I mean? okay, maybe I'm the one to blame, I don't know how to find a dude who wouldn't end up ghosting me. I don't mean meeting someone one night, having a fling ... and then he ghosts you. no. I mean being with someone for half a year. and then he ghosts you ... but no, that's not even the worst. ... a producer. you hear me? a fucking producer. this is business. you can't ghost someone in business. ... why even say anything in the first place? why promise stuff? he could have sent a text. that's all I'd need – a text. I've been dreaming of this all my life. working day in and day out for that one chance to get into the studio. don't promise me stuff then. ... send an email there's been a change of plans.

magik meggi: I see God.

eve: you know I'm a good fuck!

magik meggi: and God said

eve: you know I'm a good fuck!

siren: oi, meggi ...

magik meggi: God said

eve: you know I'm a good fuck!

siren: meggi, come on!

magik meggi: I can't hear him!

siren: meggiiii!

eve: you know I'm a good fuck, you know I'm a fuckin' fuckin' good fuck!

lia: two weeks ago, we were supposed to go to the studio for the first time. the studio! the day before, he just stops answering. he's never there when I go to his office. has the guy dropped dead or something? being ghosted, that's the worst thing ever. you know how I felt? after half a year, after half a fucking year, we were supposed to spend christmas together ... and then he ghosts me. I call him every day for two weeks straight. then stop. ... I felt like he had really died on me. ... of course, his best mate tells me later he is far from dead. ... I was so worried he was

truly gone that I was relieved he was alive. but this dickhead producer, he'd better have dropped dead.

siren: meggi! there's something I need to ...

magik meggi: God is mute. God is fucking mute.

eve: you know I'm a good fuck!

siren: meggi, there's something I need to ...

magik meggi: why are you mute?

eve: you know I'm a good fuck, you know I'm a fuckin' fuckin' good fuck, and if you don't know, you'll find out.

siren: margaret!

magik meggi: say something, anything, just say something!

siren: margarita?

lia: I've had it with this ghosting! fucking everywhere! ... and that woman you two were about to sign the lease with ... she bailed out on eve. ... no, she didn't even bail out on her. she just ghosted her. ... ghosted. I mean, what are we? it's not even cancel culture anymore. it's ... it's what? ghost culture? ...

magik meggi: why don't you answer me? say something, anything! just say something!

lia: take fucking responsibility! have the balls to cancel me!

body

dances

alone

*(the sounds of the sea. the roaring of the waves. in the middle of a rave, **seahorse** appears, passes by lia, they look at each other and spin, then it goes over to eve and stops in front of her.)*

seahorse:

Dear Eve,

before mating, seahorses can court for days. The act of courtship serves to synchronise the reproductive state of the female and the male. During this time, they change colour, swim side-by-side while holding each other's tails, or holding onto the same strand of seaweed, and spin together in the so-called "pre-dawn dance". Seahorses dance, yes, seahorses dance in couples. They engage in the "courtship dance", which lasts about 8 hours. After days of courtship, days of courtship, their reproductive states are synchronised, enabling the male to receive the eggs when

the female is ready to deposit them. During the "true courtship dance", the male pumps water through the egg pouch on his body, which expands and opens, enabling the male to show the female his emptiness. He shows her his emptiness! His emptiness. Can you imagine how vulnerable and brave he is at the same time? The female deposits her eggs into this emptiness, her body slims, his swells. Then, the two descend back into the seaweed. And she swims away. She swims away. She simply swims away. And dances alone from then on. She dances alone at the rave. Dances alone every night, thinking she is supporting the community. The tribe, the one big loving tribe that dances together. Eve, do you really believe that you don't dance alone? Every night before I go to sleep, I write you a letter in my mind.
Your Seahorse M

(seahorse leaves the stage. eve gazes after it.)

body

does not dance

lia: first, I'm ghosted by him. then, I write an album about that relationship. which started as a summer romance. a romance by the sea. and now ... get this ... the producer of that album has ghosted me as well.

magik meggi: God is mute.

eve: God is cute?

magik meggi: no, God is mute!

siren: meggi, there's something I need to tell you.

magik meggi: God is mute.

eve: what's he look like?

magik meggi: he looks ... he looks ... what is that now? ... he looks ... he looks like he's got an udder!

eve: he's got an udder?

siren: eh?

magik meggi: he's got an udder!

eve: and what does the uddered god say?

magik meggi: the uddered god said ... he said ... he came down from the sky, the uddered god, he came down from the skyyyyy and told me (*pause*) no. he didn't tell me. he showed me this udder. this udder has ... has ... (*a huge udder comes down from the sky*) this udder has ... has ... this udder has seven knives.

SEVEN KNIVES!

and MK-84

BLU-109

MK-83

RP RUGER AMERICAN R2

PAP RUGER 1262

RP MERCURY 870

RP RUGER AMERICAN PREDATOR

and a plane bomb

and a free-fall plane bomb this udder's got

and a laser-guided bomb, too

Udder speaks:

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(Udder goes silent, hanging in the space and swaying slightly. eve leaves the space in the direction as the seahorse did. magik meggi and lia continue to stare at the udder. siren stares at magik meggi. the sound of the sea. the roaring of the waves. the sound of the ocean depths. the depths of the mariana trench.)

below the surface

magik meggi: yes ... um ... I came ... just like I told you on the phone ... one thing and another ... you know ... so I decided to ... invest ... in myself a little. literally. how else will I spend my money if not on investing in myself. right? you see, here, *(takes the phone out of her purse)* I've made a wallpaper out of it: "on myself, in myself, for myself." *(shows the wallpaper)* that's my motto. since yesterday. ... if I'd decided this myself? ... to pay you a visit? ... myself? ... yes, myself. ... because I'm worried ... about myself ... because I'm worried ... about my future. because it has ceased to exist. ... this future. I had it all. it was all set up. I had a plan. there was a plan. things were solid. ... but now ... but now ... and ... I can't see my future ... I can't sleep. ... I constantly feel some kind of pressure in my body. ... as if my chest is going to explode. ... if only it did. because I would no longer feel the pain.

(just as the seahorse earlier, K enters. he approaches lia, watches her, comes closer. K takes lia by the hand. lia stops staring at Udder. the sounds of the sea. the roaring of the waves.)

K: Darling.

lia: I don't know where Eve is,
but I know you're holding my hand.

K: Darling.

(lia and K hold hands. they go towards the exit. before going out, lia stops and waits. siren continues to stare at magik meggi.)

below the surface

magik meggi: I need a new plan double quick, one that's solid. ... I have a job. ... I'm employed. permanently. although I don't know how I'll manage now, just with my finances. in fact, I'm already planning to move, together with a friend. ... if there's anything truly solid, it's them. for thirteen years. ... siren, my bestie. there's four of us actually, lia and eve as well. ... eve was just about to sign a lease, but the landlady just disappeared. so now, eve and I are looking for a place together ... before? with my boyfriend. fiancé. ex-fiancé. ... nine years. ... nineteen. ... we got engaged five months ago. ... in fact ... gosh ... this is going to sound so stupid. ... I feel I'm just so stupid. ... peter, my boyfriend, ex-boyfriend ... oh gosh... I haven't told it to anyone like this. ... no, not even my mates. ... besties. when they asked me why such a rush all of a sudden ... I really didn't have the energy for that talk. ... because they would have judged me. ... yes, they are true friends. ... okay, maybe judged is the wrong word. they wouldn't have understood. ... so ... peter wanted to change his job ... ever since joining that firm ... I mean ... it was just ... there was no time for us anymore. ... and he was always dead tired. ... or stressed out. ... his job

never give up his voice for me. not even theoretically. and I ... I lied for him, to eve, to lia, even to siren.

(siren continues to stare at magik meggi. then, eve enters in a dress printed with a sexualized naked female body. she is holding a thick rope and pulling it along. at the other end of the rope is seahorse. it is led by eve by the rope tied around its neck.)

SONG: HORSE GIRL

eve:

I'm a crazy horse girl!
 a crazy horse girl!
 crazy crazy horse girl!
 a crazy horse girl!
 I'm a crazy horse girl.

"Ride me like you ride your horse!"

I will ride you like I ride my horse
 I will ride you like I ride my horse

horse
 hoe
 ho
 ha
 ah
 ah
 aaaaaaaaaah

you don't actually
 have to own a horse
 to be a horse girl

(sea horse starts spinning on the spot around its axis.)

A woman is planning to marry
 an AI HOLOGRAM
 who was trained on her past boyfriends!

A Spanish-Dutch artist named Alicia Framis
 is planning to marry an AI hologram
 named AILex in a unique ceremony
 scheduled for this summer.

This summer.
 This summer.

AILex was trained using data
 related to Framis' previous romantic partners.
 Partners.
 Partners.
 Partners.

Whatever you want!
 Whenever you want!
 Whatever you want!
 Whenever you want!

Framis will tie the knot with AILex
 in a ceremony set to take place
 at the Depot Boijmans Van Beuningen Museum
 in Rotterdam, the Netherlands.
 Netherlands.
 Neverlands.
 Never
 Whenever
 Whatever
 You want

Want
 Want
 Want
 The artist views the wedding as representative
 of a "new generation of love"
 where humans form relationships
 with holograms, avatars, and robots.
 A new generation of love.
 Love.
 Love.
 Love
 Lover
 Liver
 Liber
 Libera

Liebe! Liebe! Liebe!
 Liberal!

Whatever you want!
 Whenever you want!
 Whatever you want!
 Whenever you want!

PART THREE

7. fossils

Seahorse stops spinning. It takes off the rope around its neck. It looks around, observing the hen party decorations and the rest of the tacky ornaments from the previous scenes. It looks at the dump on the sea bottom. Slowly, it starts removing the trash from the stage, piece by piece. Seahorse is cleaning the sea bottom and

every now and then

a voice can be heard

during the clean-up.

Or the voice disappears altogether.

And only a caption

appears

every now and then.

*A Mermaid is a Mermaid
at fifteen, when she is allowed to rise to the surface of the ocean.*

*At twenty-eight, you are not a Mermaid,
but a Mature Woman.*

*A Married Woman
or at least one in a serious relationship
with a fiancé.*

*You are a Mermaid at sixteen,
when you flirt with half your highschool.
You are a Mermaid at eighteen,
when you flirt with half of Corfu on your senior class trip,
so that ten years later you are Married
and your little toddler is pulling at your skirt
while your belly balloons for a second time.*

*Once, a long while ago, I had a wonderful voice.
I sang.
But they said I was screaming. Bloody murder.
Now, I am silent. In order not to kill.
I listen.
And I don't know how long I can hold out.*

Once, ages ago, this body was created out of a different one. And so it came that different people claimed it as their own. Then, I wished to prove that it was mine. And they allowed it, saying I could do with it whatever I wanted, with whomever I wanted.

And I did.

I treated my body like an object.

A commodity. On the market. The free market. Thinking I was in control of it.

Although control and freedom

do not go hand in hand.

A few minutes before the death of the Little Mermaid, her sisters bring her a dagger obtained from the sea witch. A dagger that demanded all their hair as sacrifice.

siren: so, why are you called magik meggi?

eve: she's named after margaret thatcher.

siren: why is that?

eve: because she sleeps with neoliberalism.

Had the little mermaid stabbed the prince, who she fell in love with, her voice would have been restored and her mermaid body would have been returned.

lia: no. margaret means pearl in latin. magik meggi is a magic pearl.

*I gave you my body. And I would have given up my voice for you.
You cast my body aside. And then, you were no longer interested in my voice.
But it was not really you who did all those things.
Because you first silenced your own voice and forgot about your own body.
And were led by one single thing, something even you didn't notice.
Because it leads us all.*

You can be anything. This world of today, this free world, offers you an opportunity to become anything and anyone. Just follow your dream and make sure to be the best version of yourself. To be productive and successful.

8. searching for an ear

Darkness. A darkness that lets us see nothing. We see no bodies. Perhaps we attempt to shift from visual culture to the culture of the word. With nothing to see, we're listening carefully. Just listening to the voices. Listening and trying to hear the dialogue. A dialogue that might have never taken place. A dialogue that should have taken place. A dialogue we wish would bring a reconciliation. A dialogue that would bring a brighter ...

magik meggi: I'll have to start dating now.

lia: okay, meggi, you made that sound like the grossest thing ever.

eve: start with tinder and bumble, and away you go!

lia: well, that's the grossest thing ever.

siren: since when?

lia: I was checking *about you* the other day, looking at some shoes ...

magik meggi: shoes for the wedding?

A dialogue that would bring a brighter tomorrow if we believe, if we already believe, or if we still believe that an intimate reconciliation can have an influence on global issues.

lia: doesn't matter what kind of shoes they were! in short, I am checking *about you*, these shoes I like, those I don't, these look really good to me, so I heart them for the wishlist. and while I'm checking out the shoes and rating if they're me or not, I get a *tinder* notification. I open it. it's a match. I don't write anything. but now *tinder's* open and I start swiping. so here I am, swiping left and right. This guy I like, that one I don't. I heart the one I like.

eve: did you get any shoes then?

Can an intimate solution have an influence on global issues?

lia: you're bloody kidding me, right?

magik meggi: did you go on a date with that match?

lia: no, I didn't. I deleted all the apps.

siren: oh, wow.

magik meggi: so, I'll die alone.

eve: oh come on, meggi, it's okay to just have a bit of fun at the start.

Silence. Because one bestie would like to tell the other that it might not be the best idea to just use people for a bit of fun. At least if both parties are not aware of it. But if one bestie said that to the other, the other would tell her to give her a break because she can do as she pleases. Because that's what freedom's all about. The result would be another argument that this is where the problem lies because nobody feels any responsibility towards anyone else anymore and that everybody uses freedom as an excuse. And if one bestie said that to the other, it would make them sound more like a textbook than play characters. Because the text itself would start to drive the word away.

magik meggi: I can't imagine snogging some stranger. or letting a random guy inside me.

eve: you'll never know until you try it. swipe a bit, shag a bit, have a bit of fun. you are in the best years for that.

magik meggi: nope. I'm in the best years for having a baby.

eve: ooooh dear, hear comes the hang-up that the female body has to be productive.

Awkward. But also true. But awkward. But where is the line between belief and friendship? Between the political and the intimate?

eve: sorry, siren, that's not how I meant it.

siren: you probably did if you said it.

eve: okay, I did, generally speaking. I wasn't referring to you.

magik meggi: but it's true, isn't it? just think of all that energy saving crap: I'm not drinking today, I'll just have tea please, I'm not going out because I need to be in bed by ten, I have to stay in my feminine energy ... energy saving this, energy saving that. maybe eve does have a point after all?

lia: well, I too missed a night out when I needed some sleep.

magik meggi: you always said it was because you had a gig the next evening. but siren just quietly saves her energy so that she can use her body productivity for something else.

siren: meggi, aren't I allowed to do what I want with my own body?

magik meggi: why didn't you tell me you were trying to get pregnant?

siren: because you once said that peter wouldn't like to have kids yet. so it was clear that you would. want to. it was clear to me it would have made you feel bad if I had told you that we wanted to and we were trying, and you two weren't.

And if this is a dialogue that could take place, one of the besties would try to soften the blow by asking the other two besties, is this a competition? In the case of an open dialogue, this would spark a debate on comparison and competition and misunderstanding and the consequent silence and hiding things between besties. And after all this, reconciliation

would no longer be possible. At least not in this scene because they would start bickering about competing in their personal and professional lives. This would end with the thought that at least one of them is free to search for her voice and express herself on her career path. Whereby this lucky girl would defend herself from these accusations by saying that her career is not fulfilling in the slightest because she has to constantly

lia: prove myself and be better and keep producing stuff. and even then, it's clearly not good enough for anyone. because it won't sell. and this is why, essentially, we won't produce anything at all.

magik meggi: at least you do what you really want to.

lia: even in my work life, I don't know what, where, or with whom I'll work next. the same goes for my personal life; I don't know when, where, with whom and what I will do next.

magik meggi: but you like your freedom, don't you?

Silence.

lia and magik meggi: my therapist said ...

lia: oh ...

magik meggi: I didn't know you were seeing one ...

siren: did you start after the break-up?

magik meggi: I did.

lia: I started after your engagement.

eve: this means you can now quit. as for you, meggi, the first thing you need now is a bit of fun. it's been ages.

siren: post-break-up advice from someone who's never been in a relationship? probably best to ignore it.

eve: people go to church and let the priest advise them on how to live with their partners even though the priest has never been in a relationship.

siren: my point exactly, that sucks!

eve: well, today you go to psychotherapy instead of seeing a priest. it's a new religion of some kind. for self-work. but the priest was actually a much cheaper option. which tells you a lot about how fucked up society really is. first they fuck you up, while you're paying. and then, you literally pay them to teach you how to live in this world. but you're convinced that you are doing something good for yourself and that you have to get yourself together to get ready for someone. to finally be a good enough woman. or man. it doesn't matter.

and we all view ourselves as products. making sure we're good enough for the market. and the market is society. and it destroys you. rather than trying to change society, everyone goes to individual therapy for a little chat from their perspective. and then, we think we're healed and better individuals, better pillars of society. because we work so hard on ourselves! even though our self-help process gets us totally isolated from society. and is very costly btw. this makes the priest less of a scam in my mind. because at least he got to meet all of his parishioners on sundays, when the whole congregation was together in one place.

magik meggi: lia, what did your therapist say?

But in a dialogue that might take place, the bestie doesn't say that after all. The bestie holds back. She censors the monologue about her views, knowing she could hurt her two besties.

lia: that I probably can't sleep because I feel anxious due to my insecurity and instability.

The bestie would finally be able to speak up about the permanent impermanence. About being in a constant situationship instead of a relationship. Both professionally and intimately.

eve: I didn't know things were so bad for you.

lia: me neither.

magik meggi: I know it's not quite the same ... but ... that's how I felt when I had to start looking for a flat.

siren: but you two have found one now, right?

eve: yeah, close to our high school. lol.

magik meggi: but it still stresses me out, because I know this is my place for now, it's temporary. I don't see a future in it.

At this point, the dialogue, if it were to take place, would be interrupted by a short pause, by silence.

lia: meggi, how about your therapist, what did they say?

At this point, the bestie would tell her besties everything she told her psychotherapist. She would tell them about the lie she got caught up in. The lie she spun to them, her very own besties. The lie she spun out of competitiveness. The lie that isolated her. She would tell them and feel less alone.

magik meggi: siren ... what would you rather have, a boy or a girl?

siren: it makes no difference to me.

magik meggi: well, if it happens to be a boy ... remember we both wanted the name wade?

siren: I do, yeah.

magik meggi: if you still like it, and if it's a boy ... I won't be offended if you name him wade.

lia: why wade?

eve: because that's just what he'll do: wade through everything!

At this point, the dialogue, if it could take place and create a brighter tomorrow, would be interrupted by laughter.

siren: if it is a boy, dominik would like him to be nik, so he's a part of him.

lia: dominik and nik? really?

siren: yeah. crazy, eh?

magik meggi: please let him be wade.

eve: and if it's a girl, will she be ren or en?

siren: no, she'll be sir.

Laughter.

lia: meggi, are you crying?

eve: meggi?

magik meggi: a mermaid has no tears. and therefore she suffers more.

Hans Christian Andersen, writer, 1837.

siren: meggi?

lia: are you crying?

magik meggi: no. ... my ... my eyes leaked.

lia: meggi, are you crying?

magik meggi: no. my eyes leaked as I achieved.

Andrew Tate, influencer, 2023.

Epilogue if there were a dialogue

*The mermaid
is no longer alone
after one hundred and eighty-seven years.*

*The mermaid
has returned to her sisters
after one hundred and eighty-seven years.*

*The mermaid
has returned to her collective
after one hundred and eighty-seven years.*

*The mermaids, set out as one,
are searching for their bodies and voices
after one hundred and eighty-seven years.*