



//DASEZNA//////////2022//

Queer Writing Workshop.



//INTRODUCTION//////////

This zine is the product of the first queer writing workshop that has taken place in Belgrade, hosted by Jamie Kofler and Alex Maurer.

Over the course of two months, we, a group of queer people met up once a week to write, read, share our texts and laugh with each other.

Inspired by some simple prompts, we all went into different directions with our texts. From short poems to detailed fictional texts about galaxies far from earth, the best pieces produced in the workshop have found their places in this zine.

This project was part of Jamie's and Alex' work at the LGBTQ* organization Da Se Zna <https://dasezna.lgbt/>.



//GROUP POEMS//////////

One of our first writing exercises were group poems. Each poem was started by one person who wrote the first line and then passed the poem on to the next person, until it reached its original author again. What all poems have in common is the structure. If you want to create another one of these so-called rondels, here is what you need:

Line 1: anything

Line 2: new line

Line 3: new line

Line 4: repetition of line 1

Line 5: new line

Line 6: new line

Line 7: repetition of line 1

Line 8: repetition of line 2



//THREE PIGEONS ARE FIGHTING////
OVER A PIECE OF BREAD//////////

Three pigeons are fighting over a piece
of bread.

An angry chihuahua breaks off the leash.
It starts chasing the pigeons.

Three pigeons are fighting over a piece
of bread

It's a feast which will soon be over.
Anger flares, pointy teeth bare.

Three pigeons are fighting over a piece
of bread.

An angry chihuahua breaks off the leash.

//THERE WAS A GUY WHO STARTED/// A WRITING CLASS.//////////

There was a guy who started
a writing class.

He wanted to write, because words
constantly filled his mind.

Make sense out of his thoughts, put
them together.

There was a guy who started
a writing class.

Desperate to learn, dying to start.

Expecting no less than a work of art.

There was a guy who started
a writing class.

He wanted to write, because words
constantly filled his mind.

//STARING AT THE EMPTY PAPER,///
LOOKING FOR A RHYME.//////////

Staring at an empty paper, looking for
a rhyme.

The paper stares right back, confused.

Is there really nothing in my heart that
deserves to live on a paper?

Staring at an empty paper, looking for
a rhyme.

I am just sitting here, passing the time.

Is it just me, does everyone hear a chime?

Staring at an empty paper, looking for
a rhyme.

The paper stares right back, confused.

//THE POISON OF YOUR WORDS////////
COURSED THROUGH ME.//////////////////

The poison of your words courses
through me.

It sears and burns with blisters blooming.

But I'm used to it, of course.

The poison of your words courses
through me.

I did not know, the day we met

All you ever planned was to hurt me.

The poison of your words courses
through me.

It sears and burns with blisters blooming.

//ON THE DAY THE WALLS CAME /////
DOWN, I WAS ALONE.//////////

On the day the Walls came down,
I was alone.

I felt like the only human left on earth.

I ran as fast as I could, but other than
trees, nothing.

On the day the Walls came down,
I was alone.

Feeling like everything changed,

Yet everything would stay the same, as it
always does,

On the day the Walls came down,
I was alone.

I felt like the only human left on earth.

**//THE WOODEN FLOOR CREAKED UNDER
THEIR FEET.//////////////////////**

The wooden floor creaked under
their feet.

They felt the fear all over their bodies.
Is this the end?

The shadows danced by candlelight.

The wooden floor creaked under
their feet.

The door opened and they saw a freak.

A freak, or a man?

The wooden floor creaked under
their feet.

They felt the fear all over their bodies.
Is this the end?

//ITEMS FROM OUR BAGS//////////

In the first session, everyone was very eager to start writing. So we wrote another text, this time, it was based on an item from one's bag. The texts could either be about the importance of that item in your life, or written from the perspective of the item. It was pure coincidence that the following texts are about two items that belong together: A lighter and a cigarette.

Vasa, on the other hand, wrote about the responsibility his stick has to carry.



//ANOTHER CIGARETTE////////// //////////BY ALEXEI//

I'm just standing at the train stop, waiting. Simultaneously I am bored and anxious. I always am, when I'm waiting. That's why I light a cigarette. It doesn't really help. There's no relief or enjoyment, there is just the passage of time. It burns away, the smoke passes through my lungs, pollutes the air around me, but the train doesn't arrive. Another cigarette, and it still isn't here. Some people measure the passage of time with songs. I measure it with cigarettes.

It burns and burns and burns away, and through the smoke I see the ceiling of the room where I once stayed. Lying on the floor, I counted down the days.

I somehow thought that it would all end.

I'm always surprised when it doesn't. Time keeps passing by, I keep breathing, inhaling the smoke and letting it out.

I begin to wonder, how will I shake it now?
That which I'd thought would be
a short-lived rebellion, turned habit,
now turned addiction.

And since things didn't end there, in that room, I am consequently left standing, with a death stick between my fingers.

And it burns and burns and burns away.

Because I need something in my hands.
Standing, sitting, talking and existing
have become difficult, without something
in my hands. With no relief or enjoyment
I ask myself, why do I even do it?

Aren't habits such a powerful thing?

Now, years after I'd left that room, I find myself having to pick up the pieces I had thought I would simply leave behind.
Sometimes I wish I had. Because it's rotten work; trying to hold together something that was meant to fall apart.

That's why I light another one. Because I can't be bothered.

It burns and burns and burns away. And the train still hasn't come.

//OBJECT(LIGHTER)//////////
//////////BY HAYDEN//

I stumbled in darkness, tripping over an invisible bar that was always present when I was in my drunken stupor.

Fear crawled right into my charred and blackened heart; a death-stick hanging limp and cold from between my lips.

I felt my pockets again. Nope. Nothing there. A set of clinking, dangling keys came out at the tip of my finger as though it would reappear inside if only I left my pocket empty for a heartbeat or five.

With a heavy sigh, I knew there was only one way to go forth. So down the street I walked with tingling expectation.

And there you were, standing straight and tall, shiny and new, and as blue as the one I had lost some minutes ago. I picked you up and knew we were meant to be.

“How much?” I asked the curly-haired lady with thick lenses enlarging her watery eyes. She had a phone pressed to her ear and was talking.

“One-fifty,” she said.

I touched my chest, silently asking if she was telling that to me or the person on the phone.

“Got one-fifty or not?” she barked, meeting my cross-eyed stare with her piercing one.

“Uh...” Embarrassment came awake in my gut as I felt for my wallet and pulled out a single fifty-dollar bill.

“No!” she cried.

“Please, I have nothing smaller,” I tried to explain but my pleas fell on deaf ears.

“Nah-uh. Not gonna happen, Sonny.”
She slid the glass door of her kiosk shut
and severed all contact between us.

But you were already in my hand. And
when she turned away to retell the tale of
meeting me to her faraway friend, I spun
my way with you in my hand.

You’re my everything, Blue. Without you,
there’s never any light at the end of the
tunnel.

...cos...you’re a lighter. Get it? Oh, you got
it. No, I agree, it wasn’t very funny. You’re
right. You’re totally right, I say to avoid
another disagreement as I lift you up and
turn your vicious wheel of sparks and gas
and help myself to that sweet relief.

//CARRYING LIFETIMES////////// //////////BY VASA//

I feel movement.

It is difficult to understand the concept; it does not translate into binary. There is no such thing as distance, in code.

But I am moving nonetheless, great, terrible distances, distances that could never fit within my terrabytes. Across the ground, across the sea, across the sky, I am carried, and I carry.

I carry a tremendous weight; it is not heavy for me - one gigabyte is not that different from a hundred, or a thousand, in my mind. But I feel that it is heavy in a different way, a way that I can never fully understand. It is the weight of an entire lifetime, of scholarship, and art, and friendships, and frustrations, and disappointments, and connections, and a hundred passwords that each, themselves, represent so much more.

The weight is light within me, rendered into 1s and 0s, its original meaning lost on me, but I know it is important, to someone at least.

I also carry secrets. Secrets spoken to no one, secrets that will never be spoken to a single living soul, but which I will carry for eternity. Or at least until my circuits die and I can carry nothing at all.

I wonder sometimes if I am important too, or only what I carry. I also wonder if there is a distinction there at all. This precious cargo is not in me, it is a part of me, even with no lightning coursing through my veins I contain it and can bring it up at a moment's notice. Perhaps I am the lifetime I carry. Perhaps that is all I am, in the end.

I also carry the marks of fear, and I protect against that fear. Fear of knowledge being stolen, or worse, lost forever; I am a failsafe, a hard copy of what is otherwise so soft and fragile and easily scattered.

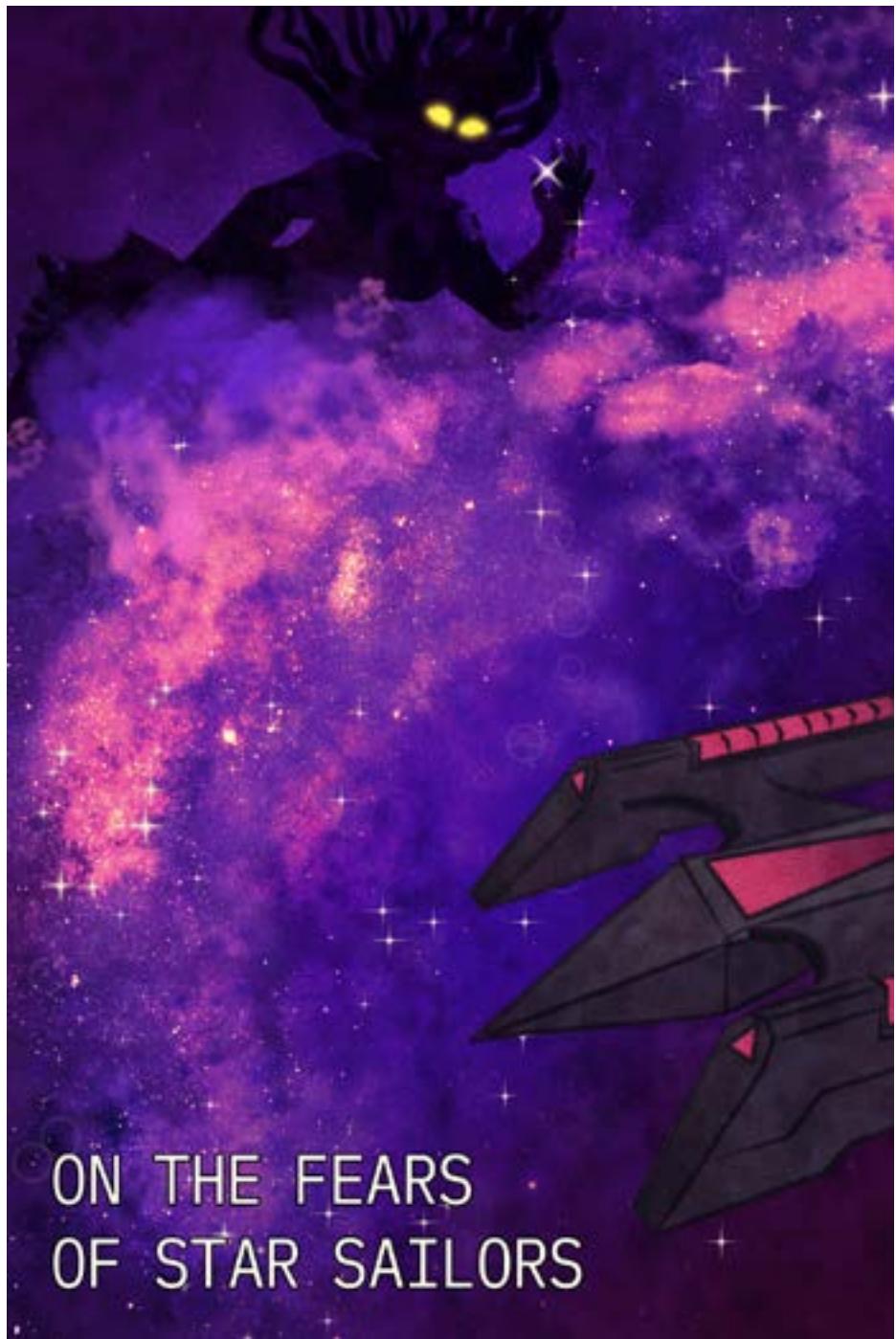
I know that what I carry is one of many copies. Every time I interface with one of my larger cousins I feel the same lifetime within them, copied perfectly; sometimes it is copied from me. Sometimes it is copied onto me. So I do not transport it from place to place - I transfer a shadow, a ghost, a... seed. A seed which can be planted elsewhere and start something new without losing the old.

This, then, is my purpose - to allow the planting of a single life in multiple locations, to be the root system, the rhizome that connects separate trunks of the same plant, half a planet apart. I may be small, but my roots spread far indeed.

//INSPIRED BY THE UNDERWATER//// NOISES OF ANTARCTICA//////////

In our second session, we listened to a mysterious sound and everyone had different associations where those sounds could be coming from. Feel free to listen to [the sound](#) while reading the next texts.





ON THE FEARS
OF STAR SAILORS

//ON THE FEAR OF STAR SAILORS///

/////////////////////////////BY EMM//

The void between the stars is a dangerous place.

It is said that the crews manning all the planet faring long-distance spaceships have to be specially trained and equipped. Sound-jammers, earplugs, music players to choke the air with noise. All vitally important. Otherwise... you might hear them.

Starmaids. Long, ethereal, showing up merely as a glitch on the sonars, yet unmistakably real. Their massive bodies swim between the stars, riding solar winds, dwarfing even the biggest dreadnought we've dared send out yet.

And when they move through the vacuum of space... they fill it with voidsong.

And it is said that once you hear the voidsong, once it thrums through your

blood and your bones and burrows within
your very mind, it's already too late.

The first symptoms are terminal.

Nothing but the cold embrace of the void
will suffice.

It is merely whispered, however, that one star sailor managed to outwit the call of the void. Liss, they called him, who locked himself in chains, sealed off all ways of escape, and opened his heart to the voidsong. He survived, unable to fling himself out of the airlock, but nobody knows what happened to him.

Some say he was driven mad, locked up in some high clearance lab.

Some say he died on his journey.

Some say he's been missing for ten years.

But all say he's a cautionary tale.

//WRITING FROM A SOUND////////// //////////BY HAYDEN//

The transmission came abruptly, like it always had. Its white noise flooded my mind, filled it with mist.

They rarely bothered to prepare you for the transmission. They never announced them anymore. Instead, the information soared through the wires and cables, climbed the tallest communication towers in their fortified cities, and spread through our tightly held nation.

I pressed the button harder and held it.

A hard reset could sometimes do the trick. The device was as old as the body that hosted it.

The edges of my vision dimmed; darkness pulsed in and out of the existence. The first bolt of pain raced down my neck and spread into my left shoulder.

The scent of tea filled the room; the fire in the hearth battled the chill that crept through the cracks of my cabin. The pattering of rain against the window came into focus, but faded away just as abruptly.

When another wave of pain traversed my neck and shoulder, I let go of the button that had been implanted into the back of my head at birth.

The white noise turned my stomach to the point where not even the brewing chamomile could soothe it.

“It’s that damned transmission,” I muttered to myself as the noise threatened to tip me out of balance. I grabbed the arm of my worn-out armchair and plopped into it with a heavy sigh.

Speaking to oneself was rather acceptable when one lived so far away from the deteriorating world some still called

civilization. This remote patch of land, guarded by none other than me, despite my years, rarely had visitors. Other than one of the Wild Kind, feral and lost if he dared come so near my fence. Madmen, the whole lot of them.

My chest heaved as calming breaths of chilly air filled my lungs and left my lips.

One... Two... Three...

Almost there.

It was pain that I was aware of, first; my teeth closed around my tongue. This pain was all that kept me sane and aware. Each transmission was worse than the one that had come before it.

Once again, an image emerged from the mist that was my mind in times of transmissions. A man and a cliff and a single, sobbing ‘forgive me, my love.’

I must see this sorted out, I reminded myself as the white noise began to fade, leaving nausea in its wake.

General Felix Carlisle is confirmed dead.

This piece of information brings the conclusive end to the terrorist activities in the northern periphery.

“As if I care,” I muttered under my breath.

Generals came and went; rebellions blazed through the dead and dry forest that our newborn nation was every decade.

One more dead general, however important to them rebels or government cronies, made no difference. The war wouldn’t end with his life.

And I would still stay out of it.

As nausea faded away, I stood. It was tea time.

With an old and greasy mitten, I reached for the cattle above the fire, lifted it off the hook, and tilted it as I aimed at the cup.

“Damn!” I bellowed as a lone gunshot in the night jerked my hand off the cattle

and hot tea splashed over the red and brown carpet.

A shout followed. A shout in a language I understood. “Help,” the voice cried.
“Help me.”

This wasn’t one of the Wild Kind. There was no sinister growl, no raspy quality to the voice that had spent decades snarling.

“Help me, please,” the voice came.
Female? Maybe.

I kicked the kettle on my way to the door. The bolts and the locks clicked open as I worked my fingers down the door frame, then flung the wooden thing open and lifted the old-fashioned shotgun that never moved from by the entrance.

Sure enough, there was a woman, running across the field and in the night, on the other side of my fence. And sure enough, a dozen of them damned Wilders were closing in.

I gripped the shotgun with both my hands, lifted it, and aimed at the sky.

//STATION ALPHA//////////
//////////BY NIKS//

//Hello, I am Delta, your friendly AI.

//How can I help you, my Gea?

Who- What- No, where am I?

//You're at Station Alpha, right next to the Remnants.

The Remnants? You need to start from the beginning, Delta. What am I?

//Of course, my Gea. You're a Humanoid from Planet 95, which was *sadly* collapsed in the War.

How long have I been here? What is the war? How did I get here? If everyone's

dead, how have I survived? An entire planet, gone. In an instant.

//One question at a time,
please.

//Our Emperor donated you to Station Alpha for reeducation. You've been a very good specimen.

//Planet 95 was a newly colonised planet, full of promise until your species went and screwed everything up. You have been a *vengeful* species, full of rage, full of unused potential. You should be happy that our kind Emperor let you exist. I don't know why She did that.

I- I don't know what to say.

So Gea started running, but she wasn't fast enough. Nobody was. She had been given a new chance at life, a place full of possibilities

and she was throwing it all away, rebelling like the other stupid Humanoids.

//She clearly hasn't been reeducated well enough. Another reboot, my Emperor orders. As if that would fix that rotten species.

Gea stops running. There is no escape.

//Reeducation process initiating.

Thank you, my Delta. Praise our Emperor.

//ACROSTIC POEMS//////////

At our next session, we went into structured poetry again. This time, the task was to create an “acrostic poem” which spelled the word “*Rainbow*”. Writing an acrostic poem means that you pick a word and write it down vertically on your piece of paper. Each line then begins with one of the letters spelling the word.

Before we wrote the poems, Vasa shared a both horrible and funny song that he came across: It was called “*The rainbow belongs to god*” and was done by some homophobic Christians. It was all about how the rainbow should not be a gay symbol, but a symbol of God. Have a look at it [here](#).

Jamie wrote a poem inspired by that song, while Alex went into a more personal direction.



|||||||||||||||||BY JAMIE//

Little backstory to this: At the beginning of the session this poem was created, someone said they had seen a really horrible, but also funny homophobic song done by some American Christians. The whole song was all about how the Rainbow belongs to god and not to queer people and how much of a sin being queer was.

It was pure coincidence that Alex and I chose the word “Rainbow” for that acrostic poem beforehand.

Inspired by that song, I wrote this poem:

Rainbows don't belong to god

And not to homophobes either

I am gay, the rainbow belongs to me

Nobody can take it away

Because queer people are here to stay!

Oh if only Christians

Were more open minded, the rainbow could be theirs, too.

|||||||||||||||||| BY ALEX //

Rain is needed to value the good times

And to make sunflowers blossom on
freshly green grass

I'm standing on the grass, raindrops on
my face mixing with my tears

Not gonna lie this scene is making me
emotional

Because I'm witnessing the in-between-
state of nature

Of rain and sun at the same time, good
and bad memories

Wildly mixed in my head, I'm thinking
about the painful time before coming out
and the joy of being my true self.

//WHAT I'VE ALWAYS WANTED//////// TO TELL YOU//////////////

Another prompt that many of us liked to write was just starting with the simple sentence: “What I’ve always wanted to tell you”.



//WHAT I'VE ALWAYS WANTED////////
TO TELL YOU...//////////
//////////BY ALEXEI//

I lied to you. I don't have a habit of doing so, but this time I had to. Or rather, I felt like I had to.

You see, I never had the intention of letting you in. You made that decision for the both of us. It was impossible keeping you out; ever since you appeared in my life, you've been reading me like an open book.

Some time ago I would have said that I regret it. That I wished I'd never met you, that you disturbed my solitude. Not anymore. I hate to admit it, but I crave your presence. The fact that you won't speak to me is killing me.

I know it probably won't change anything but I have to say that I am sorry. Not

because of what I've done, but because I had said that it meant nothing.

How could it have meant nothing?

You don't know where I was before you. You don't know how far I've fallen. I had pushed everyone away, just to cultivate that which was killing me.

Honestly? I wanted to die in peace. I didn't want anyone to get hurt by my decisions, so I pushed them away. I showed everyone how vile I was, gave them my worst, and it worked. They all left.

I was ready for everything to end.

And then you showed up. You, with your stupid combat boots, that hideous leather jacket and your big dreams. I hated you. I hated you for ruining my plans, for making the world seem just a little brighter than how I used to see it, how I'd convinced myself it was.

You have to understand. When you start to leave that place, the gutter, the rock

bottom, and start climbing upwards, it's terrifying. I wasn't ready for it. I wasn't ready to be alive again or to love again.

That is the only reason I lied. I was afraid. You had gotten too close, and I felt too vulnerable. I thought that pushing you away, like I had everyone else, would be the only thing that would solve everything. If I'm not close to anyone, then no one can hurt me.

I was wrong. I've never felt worse. And for once, I don't feel pity for myself. Rather, I deeply regret having hurt you in an attempt to protect myself.

I am so, so sorry for having shattered the image you had of me. I'm sorry I led you on and then ruined it. I'm sorry I lied. Because Seth, I do love you. Nothing that I've done was pretense. And I ruined it. I'm sorry. Seth, I'm sorry.

But I suppose it doesn't matter anymore. You're gone, and you'll never read these

words. I hope you build a new life for yourself, a better life, one that will not be tainted by me.

Tye

**//WHAT I'VE ALWAYS WANTED//////////
TO TELL YOU//////////BY JAMIE//**

What I've always wanted to tell you, is how much it sucks that you left.

You left me alone, with no explanation where you went or why you even left in the first place.

One day you were here, the next you were gone. But I should've seen it coming, because you were always that kind of person - so unpredictable. When I first met you, I liked that about you. Being unpredictable made you cool, edgy, popular. It was basically your whole personality.

I don't know where you are now, if you're still in the city or already outside the country. You could be anywhere.

I always thought that we were friends and that I was someone you trusted. The fact that you left me, clearly shows that you didn't. Did you trust anyone else? Did you trust the boyfriend you dumped with no explanation right before you left? Did you trust the girl you were cheating on with your boyfriend and clearly loved more than him?

I can't even think of a single person who really had a significant role in your life longer than a couple of months. You were always getting bored of people, no matter how exciting they seemed to be for you in the beginning.

I fell for you, just like everyone else did. Being emotionally unavailable somehow made you incredibly attractive.

I am very loyal, but nobody seems to find it attractive at all.

I don't even know why this whole situation with you still makes me sad, even though it's been almost 6 months since you left. At first everyone was talking about you at school, everyone had their opinion about your whereabouts. But the rumors quieted down quickly and other gossip became more important.

I wonder how everyone else seems to have forgotten about you, except for me. It's probably because you treated most people the same, at first they'd be everything you'd talk about and then they quickly vanished from your screen.

Except for me, I stayed. I don't know why though, but you seemed to like me. I guess I was so socially awkward that you didn't have to worry about what to say in order to fit in with the popular kids. Like that one time I explained to you what low-key and high-key actually means because

you confessed to me that you had no idea why people used those words.

What I've always wanted to tell you is that you could've told me and I'd have gone with you. I would do anything to leave this place and to run away, like you did. You are so much braver than I am, you don't care about your parents. Or maybe your parents don't care about you.

I felt sorry for you about that, but you always seemed to be rather fine with it.

Sometimes I am almost certain I've seen you walk by at the school grounds, but then it's just your little sister. Does she know where you are?

Maybe she does. Your sister always seemed to be your bestest friend. Maybe she was the one person you trusted, after all.

I don't even know if your sister recognizes me at all, though. She'll be just like you

in two-year's time, too cool to recognize people's names and faces.

Would you even recognize me now? Do you even bother thinking about me now?

The more I think about how less you care about me, the more of a loser I feel.

You were the popular girl who ran away and I'm the introvert who had a crush on you and felt like it was an honor to be your friend.

You once told me what you like about me: That I'm different, more honest, less fake and that it's refreshing to hang out with me because of how annoying all the cool girls actually are.

Still, you were one of them.

Maybe that's why our friendship lasted until the day you left. Because we are inherently different. I don't believe you got particularly bored of me. Because I bet you didn't think about me or anyone specifically when you made the decision

to run off. You just did because you were sick of your life as it was here.

I still wish you would've left me something, but you just left me alone, cluelessly.

Everytime I walk by your locker, right behind the chem labs, I wonder if the roses you got for Valentine's day are still in there.

You seemed like a magnet, attracting boys and girls equally. My god, you got roses on Valentine's day from at least three different people, even though you had a boyfriend at the time.

I'm sure you've slept with all of them.

By the end of the school year, some handyman will probably break the locker open and throw your stuff out, to make space for a new kid. Maybe that's when you'll finally disappear from my memories.

//FROM THE SHORES OF//////////
THE RIVER STYX//////////
//////////BY VASA//

My love,

I know you will join me soon. I see the stream of Trojan souls that tumble, headfirst, into Hades in your wake, and I hear their cries of terror at your baleful visage. I know what you are like, when you lose yourself in the Goddess's wrath. And so I know you will not stop, and will keep going till you fall down here too.

I will rejoice at our reunion, of course, but I wish it did not have to be so soon. I wish that you could hear me, that my voice could reach you from this dismal riverside, carried, perhaps, by some chthonic wind up through a crack beneath your heel. I wish, in truth, that I had told you this before our parting, but I could not conceive my own mortality, as I know you cannot yours.

So I wish that I had told you: do not lose yourself upon my loss. Do not become that force of nature I have seen you give yourself to - at least, not in my name.

If you would do one thing in my name, Achilles, I would have you live, live for decades yet, live until you become as great as your mother knew you could be when she sought to save you as a babe. Live, however long it takes, knowing I would be here, waiting, whenever you arrived.

I wish that I had said all this before our parting. But I did not, and I know you, so I know living is the furthest thing from your heart and mind right now. I know your mother could protect you from all things but yourself. So I will rejoice at our reunion, though I wish you'd give yourself more time.

//INSPIRED BY SONGS//////////

In the beginning of the fourth session, we played a song-guessing game, in which everyone could choose to write about one of 5 given songs. The others had to guess which song was their inspiration. It was a fun exercise and not always as easy to guess the song as expected.

Imagine by John Lennon

This Is Me by Keala Settle

Think by Aretha Franklin



//IMAGINE//////////BY NIKS//

Imagine an utopia. Imagine not being angry all the time. Imagine actually being able to live. Imagine having the right to not get killed on the street for being black or trans or neurodivergent or any kind of Other. Imagine no borders, a truly free society. Imagine living in a world which doesn't revolve around a rich guy's finger. Imagine an actually equal society where your differences are accepted. Imagine not being pumped full of sugar by your daily can of Coca Cola. Imagine not getting flooded with commercials, being able to actually breathe for a second. Imagine being free to do what you choose with your body. Indeed, imagine having a single choice about your life. Imagine a non-capitalist society.

Now let John Lennon say that it's easy if you try, when you've actually been trying for centuries by this point. Let

John Lennon get rid of his possessions instead of 300-or-so other John Lennons controlling the world. Imagine eating the rich, defunding the police who would rather defend a Walmart than a school of poor kids, who would rather stand and listen to children screaming than actually do anything. Imagine actually doing gun control like the rest of the civilised world so that you could actually stop the terrorists killing innocent civilians. Imagine just breathing in and breathing out and having it all stop. Be over.

Imagine all the people sharing all the world. Imagine it. But, you can't. Fredric Jameson said that. Mark Fisher confirmed that. Slavoj Žižek did too. We live in a deeply dystopian society, we can imagine so many different apocalypses and yet we can't imagine an escape from this hellhole of a system. The truth is that we're living in an apocalypse already. We have to find an escape.

**//THIS IS ME//////////
//////////BY ALEX//**

Coming out is hard. Especially when you are trans you have to come out again and again and again. But it also lays so much beauty in coming out. It's being honest with the world. Showing who you truly are. It's clearing up the air so you can finally see a bright future in front of you. Having the feeling of living again. A big weight falling off from your shoulders, knowing that you don't have to hide anymore.

You feel the warmth of a welcoming hug from the community. You cry happy tears after so many sad tears. You are finally finding hope. You know that there is a place for people like you in this world. You find people that you belong to. You give yourself the freedom of expressing yourself.

Honey, it will be hard even after coming out but you did a beautiful thing that you can be proud of. For once you truly committed to yourself and acknowledged who you are. You said yes to yourself and there lies so much power in not being ashamed.

You won't be proud of yourself and your identity every single second in your life but that's okay. You will wish to be straight and cis because it's still hard for queer people to exist.

But my advice is: Find your people.

And in the end everything will be okay because we stick together. And strengthened we can go out in the world and change it for the better. I hope that you know that you are worthy of all the love in the world.

//THINK//////////BY EMM//

Lennox careened through the narrow streets of her dusty home town, running like all the devils of Hell were nipping at her boots. She picked up her skirts to run faster - she was dressed in a nightgown, a startling sight for anyone awake, though the gun holstered in the belt at her hip signaled she was no easy pickings.

Thankfully, there was no one awake and up at this hour of the night. The town was asleep, silent but for her footsteps echoing around the ramshackle wooden houses. It was a bit of a one-horse town - they rarely got visitors, and the sheriff spent more time minding his cows than upholding the law - which didn't mean much, as the law of the strongest was king in the wild frontier.

She saw her target - Billie, saddling her horse, planning to ride on into the sunrise

like an idiot. Lennox all but collided with the cowboy, and gave her a ringing slap across the face. “What’s wrong with you?!” she hissed, all but spitting. “Why the fuck were you gone when I woke up?”

Billie’s face flushed - one side blooming into a red handprint - as she shrugged her broad shoulders. “Well, Maddie...” She looked away, abashed, until Lennox grabbed her by her coarse button-down shirt and shook. With their height difference, it was not unlike a chihuahua growling at a wolfdog.

“Well what?”

“You know it’s... It’s different out in the field, y’know. Sleepin’ outdoors... Nothing a real lady’s used to, y’know. And you’re... gosh, you’re a real lady...” Billie squeaked out, running a hand through her short hair and adjusting her handkerchief. “I didn’t think you’d want...”

“Oh? You didn’t believe I’d hack it, huh? Decided to skip goodbyes and leave, then?” Maddie Lennox was reaching levels of fury beyond her wildest dreams. Every neuron in her body lit up with a righteous flame of anger, all of it directed at Billie. “Decided to make that decision for me, hmm?”

“Well that’s not how I meant...” started Billie, only to be silenced by the sheer force of Maddie’s imperious glare. Even though one of them was an experienced cowboy, rumoured an outlaw, dressed to the nines in riding gear, and another a skinny waif in a night dress, there was no doubt about which of the two was scarier.

“What you meant isn’t what you did. And that’s the problem. You can’t make those decisions for me. If I want to live a cowboy’s life with you, you either trust me to know what I’m getting into... or you tell me to fuck off to my face. None of this cowardly shit. Got it?”

//WHAT DID THREE FLASHES////////// MEAN?///////////////////////////////

As many of us loved to write fictional stories, here is Emm's story starting with the following prompt: *One flash from a flashlight meant danger, two flashes meant it was safe; but she saw three flashes that night from across the field, and they had never talked about what three flashes meant.*



//////////BY EMM//

One flash from a flashlight meant danger, two flashes meant it was safe; but she saw three flashes that night from across the field, and they had never talked about what three flashes meant.

It could be fucking anything. Well, for all she knew, it could be nothing, and Jones just got excited and pressed safe one too many times.

She waited another few minutes, hoping Jones would get the hint and redo her signaling, but nothing happened. Wait, no - at the tail end of her patience, her co-conspirator clicked the flashlight one, two, three times again!

Fucks sake.

If this was Jones trying to fuck with her, she'd regret it. Hunting cryptids is serious business! Especially at night, especially in the middle of fucking nowhere, especially with Jones' phone fucking broken

because she threw it onto the back seat of their trunk and it bounced off the seat, out of the window, and into the fucking ditch.

(That's why they came up with the flashlight code to begin with. It was Jones' idea, and now she forgot it?)

Hertz sighed and adjusted her backpack (full of cryptid hunting supplies gotten off ebay) and tried quietly trekking across the field to the flashlight, hoping that if it was something dangerous, they wouldn't be alerted of her presence. Her hopes were dashed immediately as her thermos (full of coffee) clunked against her second thermos (full of tequila sunrise).

She soldiered on anyway, reaching her partner in crime in record time. Jones was crouching behind a tree, holding her flashlight in one hand and her breadknife ("It's a weapon, and then later you can cut bread for toast!" she'd said) in the other.

She shushed Hertz before she could even say anything and beckoned her frantically to come nearer.

“What?” mouthed Hertz, frowning. It was an impressive frown, even by Hertz standards. She put every muscle of her face into it, the rippling of her bushy brows, the twist and scowl of her full lips, she even turned slightly sideways so the moonlight shined on her profile.

Jones just stifled a giggle, as always. She was by far the more carefree of the two, and it showed from the laugh lines in her face to her unbrushed, untameable hair, and even in the oversized windbreaker jackets (full of tactical pockets) she wore.

“I don’t know if it’s safe or not!” she whispered. “Hence, three flashes.”

Hertz had to admit it made sense.

“Well, what is it? Did you find any trace of jackalopes? Maybe a mothman?” asked Hertz.

“No, it’s uh... It’s something different,” said Jones, looking over her shoulders to where the field ended and the forest began. She was idly biting down on her nails (painted green, chipped) - a sign of stress Hertz knew.

“A ghost?”

“No... look,” she pointed, and Hertz followed her hand, only to gasp.

The trees were damaged, twisted and burned, like something crashed into them at high speed. Skidmarks charred the grass. And at the end of the lines, a crash, a twisted... object, of some sort? A vehicle, made of some kind of gleaming metal? Twisted beyond recognition by the fall, but the way it was made and the materials it was made of indicated it was of no earthly design. They’d never seen anything like it. Fluorescent liquid dripped from it, glowing and staining all the foliage. It sparked, and fizzed, and made weird robotic noises, as if

something inside it was trying to activate. Smoke rose in columns and clung to the trees.

The girls gasped in unison.

“A flying saucer.”

//ADVENTUROUS NONSENSE GROUP//// STORIES//////////

To make our workshop complete, we wrote group stories in our last session. What made those stories special was that they were passed on in a circle, but no one knew the context of the stories one was adding a sentence to!



//////////STARTED BY NIKS//

The ocean had started crushing my bones.
The crack-crack-crackling deafened me.
I had to do something - I aimed my rifle
straight and true to bring an end to that
horrible NOISE. It didn't work - there was
no blessed silence, even after the gunshot
stopped echoing between the walls.
It kept going and going, but was that
sound even real? Did I just imagine that
the sound was still there because I had
heard nothing else for so long? But this
definitely sounded like steps, right? The
protagonist became more worried. But to
worry too much was the job description
of any good protagonist. However, I was
tired of being a good protagonist, I was
tired of doing things I've been told, so I
decided to take a nap instead.

//////////STARTED BY HAYDEN//

He stared right back at me, eyes ablazed, nostrils flaring; I'd gotten a reaction from him, at last. Finally, finally - he realized just how much I hate him, and I knew the feeling was mutual. Things would never be the same after this - but that was okay; maybe, eventually, they would be better. One had to have hope, for hope was all that was left. But no one had any hope left, and so they all just watched the old castle burn down. The old glamor starts to vanish, flames everywhere. Everything was and everything will be lost. I could use a magnifying glass, like old-school detectives, but that would have to involve a rather large smoking pipe. I didn't know where to find a pipe that big - well unless you count my ex - so I decided to do my investigation, dressed like Jessica Jones. I was very disappointed that no one got the reference.

//////////STARTED BY VASA//

On the day of her death, Maria woke up to a blood-red sky. She should have known then that something bad would happen. But now it was already too late, and where her brother used to sleep every night, was just an empty bed now. No personal items could be found in the room, even though it had been only some hours since The flood. The investigator was left with no clues. They needed to turn the tables, on them bloody culprits. And so, a brilliant plan formed - they'll frame the bastards for murder and make sure all the rival gangs believed it. It didn't work out nearly that smoothly, of course. Murder never does. I was only worried if I would be found out. But did that even matter now? It was all over anyway.

//////////STARTED BY ALEXEI//

Once upon a time, there was a boy who liked to read. He read to escape his dark and doomed reality. Because the world of books always made him feel welcomed and distracted him. Pure escapism was what he was looking for, yet he couldn't find it. It was impossible to find, just like love, or a right-handed queer person. I wouldn't give up, however, I beguiled a witch to make a starmap and I kept hunting. I found my target on a small asteroid, tidally locked to the dark side of a planet in a binary star system. It was a small, purple creature with antlers. Could I touch it? Or was it as poisonous as its color? And then I just swallowed it as a whole - no risk, no fun.

//////////////STARTED BY EMM//

The cats came to our aid at the break of dawn. They were late, as is their wont, and many of us were already dead. Our souls screamed out “Why didn’t you save us?!” As our bodies sank deeper and deeper down that rabbit hole. It was like Alice in Wonderland, we just went deeper and deeper into another world. Another rabbithole, then another, then another, and then... Finally, there was a rabbit that had snacked on my cabbage. I pounced on him, determined to turn him into a hat! He was faster than me, however, and before I even uttered a word, his raptor was between my ribs. And that was my end.

//////////STARTED BY JAMIE//

When the clock stroke 12, I slowly made my way downstairs. To the kitchen - I really wanted some sweets now! I grab some nutella and a few breadsticks. Shoving these things down my throat was the only joy I ever needed. I devoured, greedily, my own private Bacchanalia, until there was no trace left and I moved to my next target. There would have been no end to my bloody feasting, if it weren't for a brave little boy armed only with a salad fork. But how could he ever defeat me? I am smarter than him, and probably stronger, too. I could beat the shit out of him, if I wanted to. And I do, I was far too scared before, but not anymore.

//CLOSED DOORS//////////

After having a good laugh, we moved on to another prompt: Our writing was inspired by the picture of a closed door. As always, we all went into different directions with the prompt. Let's see what we've created!





//CLOSED DOOR////////// //////////BY ALEX//

Molly entered this door every day, back in the days. She looks a bit nostalgic at the door, remembering how her life looked like 40 years ago when she lived and worked in this huge building. The building was majestic with its giant front door and the front steps but ironically the glamor vanished at the back of the house. Here, where Molly is standing, you only have an oddly small door to enter the rooms of the servants.

She thinks about her time as a servant.

The work was hard, she had to wake up very early to make it warm inside the main rooms for the rich owners of the castle-sized building. Back then you didn't just turn on the heater, instead you had to make a fire out of the wood at the fireplace. Molly also had to clean, cook and take care of the children, there

were 5 of them. She was exhausted every evening as well as all the other servants.

But there were nice and exciting moments, too. Because every Sunday she had her free day and she could do everything she wanted to do. She could read outside near the lake on her favorite bench under a big old tree for hours without being interrupted by anyone.

Except that one time, she actually was interrupted. She sat on that very bench when she met Lynn the first time. Lynn asked what she was reading and how she liked the book. Asked if she could sit with Molly on the bench. They soon talked about anything and everything. There was a connection right away.

They were both so excited to finally have found someone who would truly understand them, so they lost track of time. It was already getting dark so they both had to rush back home.

This was the first of many evenings that Molly carefully slipped through the door that led to the rooms of the servants. Quietly trying to find her bed in the dark without waking anyone up after her weekly meet-ups with Lynn. Their meeting spot was always that bench by the lake where they first met.

In her memories she still sees Lynn very clearly, how they laughed together and how Molly thought about her all week. Longing for the Sunday to arrive where she could finally kiss Lynn again- secretly, covered by the trees around them. Always trying to find a spot far away from the public eye where they could just be themselves.

Molly looks at the wooden door again, tears running down her face. Thinking about Lynn and wondering where she is now- after 40 years.

//THE DOOR//////////BY ALEXEI//

The door had to be locked, of course, considering what was inside. I often wander near it, sometimes trying to open it, with no luck. Perhaps it is for the better. I often hear scratching noises and snarling, sometimes deep roars. Whatever is inside, it is far away, but its presence is heavy.

You might be wondering why I would even need to open this door, considering I was the one who put the creature inside.

I suppose it is nothing but morbid curiosity. I want to know how big the creature has grown, how ugly, how ravenous.

Yes, I put it in there, for safekeeping. I need this door, you see. I need the creature inside, locked away. If it were to come out, it would swallow me whole. And then what? Would that be my end?

No, my dear. In fact, if I were to be consumed by the creature, I would become it. Because the creature—is me. Everything I cannot show to the world is behind that door, be it my fears, my flaws, my jealousies or hatred, all safely locked away. So, the door has to be locked, and the creature must remain inside.

Don't you be curious about it. Do not try for the handle or the lock, do not try to see the creature inside. If it were to come outside, it would turn me into a monster, and it would be detrimental to me and all those around me.

Because, yes, the monster is me. It exists within me and has the potential to become me. But I promise you, I am trying. I am keeping it in chains, I am keeping it deep within that abyss, safely away from everyone.

//THE EXIT//////////BY NIKS//

At last, an old wooden door was the final thing standing between her and The Exit. She had been working towards this place for what felt like decades. The Exit had been crushing her, her bones were being shattered with every continued step. But, The Exit would be worth it. An escape from the year 2020 was all that she was hoping for.

The pandemic had changed so much about her. It corrupted her and it gave her the strength to persevere. It was the biggest challenge of her life... so far. But, it would all be worth it for The Exit was near. Ten more steps. Every thought was racing through her mind: "What if it's not the escape I'm looking for," she asked herself. But it was her only option.

Five steps left. She started walking quicker. The New Renaissance was near.

Four. The gravitational pull was becoming stronger. Three. It was there. Two. One. She's here. As she steps through The Exit, she finds herself in the future. She checks the Clock, the year is 2100. But, all she sees is fire.

//THE ROOM//////////BY VASA//

[Excerpt from rejected idea to catalogue *Our knowledge of the Room*. We proposed it as a record in case Our numbers ever fall to zero and someone must start over, and We rejected it because We realized that if that happened, there would not be anyone left to take Our place.]

There is only one Door into the Room.

The Door is not in any one place, of course - as the Room itself is not in any one place. The Door appears only to the right people, and only at the right moments in their life. Moments when they are qualified to make the Choice, or so We theorize. None have ever seen it twice. From Our experiences, we know the Door can appear in any surface, from the walls of buildings to the trunks of trees. One of Us even found it floating in the air,

unsupported by anything. We suspect this only happened because there was no available surface for the Door to inhabit.

The Room itself is bare, ten walls of cold stone around a ten-sided stone table surrounded by ten stone chairs. Some of the chairs are ornate, elaborately decorated with scrollwork and miniatures of warriors and kings and dragons, or inlaid with fine oakwood carvings and gold leaf depicting scenes of nature.

Others are simple: blocks of stone stacked in the vague shape of a chair, or a piece of plain rose marble cut with such precision that you could shave yourself on the edge of the seat.

Each chair shapes itself to match its occupant, which means that every time someone makes the Choice, one of the chairs remakes itself. How this happens is unclear. None of Us ever leave the Room, and We have never seen the chairs change, but every time the door appears

to a new person, the chair they have been called to fill will have reshaped itself to fit them.

What is the purpose of the Room? What is Our purpose? We do not know for sure, but We know it is important. One time, when too many people in a row refused the chair, Our number was reduced to eight. The world we saw through the Door when the next person came through... it is best not to dwell on it. It appears to have healed, since.

The Door always leads into the Room through the same wall - the direction We have arbitrarily dubbed “North”, though of course the Room is nowhere and therefore has no cardinal directions. The other nine walls also have doors. When a person is offered the Choice, one of the other doors will open for them. We have been unable to ascertain a pattern to which door opens when. Some of Us think it is random, others believe the doors are

also selected for the individual, much as the chairs are.

If a person walks back out the Door they came through, they go back to their lives, free of even the memory of the experience. We strongly suspect this to be the case, based on the brief glimpses We catch through the door after they leave.

If they sit in their designated chair, they become one of Us, completing the circle until one of Us passes on. This is the Choice all ten of Us made.

If they walk out the other door... well. Even We aren't privy to all the room's secrets, We suppose. Each of Us has their own theories. We'll never know for sure, though - We all made our Choice already, and no doors will ever open for Us.

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The End.