

Frequencies and sounds

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I want to thank you for letting me see myself

I want to thank you for letting me be myself

- Turnstile 'T.L.C'

Chapter 0 – Everything louder than everything else

When a tree falls in the forest and no one is listening, does it make any noise?

That's a funny one. There is so much noise around us and a lot of that we don't hear. Our human hearing is in fact limited to 20 Hz to 20 kHz. That leaves out a lot and sometimes, the loudest moments remain unheard.

So, in a way, they are like a tree falling in the forest, while no one is listening. Because we literally can't. So how much must we be missing out on?

Sound, or noise, which is basically a term that gives a valuation to the sound, is also more than just sound. It's a force and sometimes, a loud noise can change and distort reality. It can punch holes, in our history or in people and their personalities.

Imagine us being built up from tiny building bricks. Like miniscule bricks by a Danish manufacturer. That's not even so weird, because we are built out of all sorts of tiny elements, that's science. But we only understand a few of those. So, what if a loud sound, distorts those. It's not something we see on the outside, but on the inside, there is damage, things got scrambled. Think of Sick Building Syndrome, where the noisy vibrations in a building are directly affecting the wellbeing of its inhabitants. Then, think much louder, much more distorting. That sort of noise happened when the main players in this story were very young.

A strange set of events took place, that might be hard to explain. But a series of simultaneous events, created a sound that dislodged elements of reality. Like, the tiny bits of personalities were blown away from their allocated spots in the build-up of their respective humans. Scientific progress notwithstanding, it's hard to explain. But think of it as the DNA of our personalities, it's all about wholeness and harmony. But one wrong note can disrupt that. Like that key ingredient in a dish. You can still eat it, but it's not complete, right? That's sort of the result.

What happened was this: somewhere a bomb went off. It didn't hurt anyone, but it was a forgotten piece of experimental technology. Sonic in nature, and it caused a blast that carried along a couple of things in its wake it seems. It's the only of its kind and the last of its kind, developed in the late stages of a decaying Soviet-Union, abandoned by it's maker Sergei Artyemyev. A man who created something revolutionary, but totally forgot about it in later life after he moved back to his native home of Omsk. While the bomb may not have had the wide-spread damage, at least two people found their mind resolved that night after a sudden subtle noise hit their ears. One of them committed suicide an hour later, the other attempted to do so but failed. Later in life, Angelika Klimdite, would credit her zest for helping others to this moment. In turn, she will help many people regain their mental health. No other side effects were found.

As the subsonic blast washed over the countryside, bits of debris, emotional vibrations lingering in the air was carried along in sonic form. For some reason, the universe was

aligned perfectly for almost no one to be hit by all of this in a profound manner. Those who were partly hit, by the shrapnel of this unlikely blast, lost small things. Abilities, memories, words that lingered on the tip of their tongues, things that would return in time or in some cases never really popped up. Small harm, as we know, is something our body can better cope with and our mind has natural ways of shielding and coping with loss. Only two individuals were fully hit by the blast and lost something. Something vital to who they are or were to be, something small maybe to another, but key to their wholeness.

Chapter 1 – Gedas

I wonder why the sun seems intent on returning every few seasons, but I can definitely see why it is keen to leave as autumn falls over this city. I ponder the motivations of the celestial body, as snow crystals crunch under the weight of my sneakers. After a particularly useless Saturday, spending some time working out (with the motivation levels of someone who doesn't really want to work out), I've gathered myself, my thoughts and my coat and stepped out on the street.

There was a cold wind blowing. The kind that cuts through your clothes and into the very heart of your being, making you feel naked and bare to the elements and their corresponding gods. Depending on your worldview, you can exchange these two perhaps. I like to see them as one and the same. I throw myself forward through the snow-covered street, with its dangerously slippery tiles in front of the hotel door, around the corner from his destination. In my ears, the music of Liturgy is pumping its intricate patterns of transcendental black metal, a style alien to most other passersby on the street on this grey October afternoon. With unnecessary force, guided by the swelling intensity of the music, I pull open the door and almost leap inside.

As my hand quickly brushes his earphones, I take stock of the space I am in. This unique bookstore and coffee shop in one, my favorite to be an unappreciated regular in. I spot an open seat by the window and with due haste, toss my bag down as I make my way to the counter to order my overly big cup of coffee. I hesitate, as the student tending the register and bar, lifts his eyebrows appraising me. Maybe tea would be nice? His mildly bored expression, oversized flannel and typical Vilnius-hipster facial hair harden my resolve. "One coffee please, kind sir" I intone in a slightly British accent (no reason to overdo it, right?). His questioning glare changes into a glare that tells me I am dirt under his likely hip shoes. After all, I'm older and my hipsterism looks like the uniform of a creative profession; no casual situationist *dérive*-feel... though, I snigger to myself, this buffoon with his half-art degree is likely not familiar with Guy Debord. I catch myself in my haughty attempts to find validation in perceived superiority, smile apologetically and pay by card (naturally). I refuse the use of a smartphone or smartwatch for these tasks. I have no real reason, but it makes me feel authentic.

As I've now plopped down in that window seat with little to no focus, staring at the page blankly, I might as well let my thoughts drift. Drift to that closed door in my head, as I think about the book in front of me. I'm deep into 'Hyperion', by Dan Simmons, one of the fantasy classics (or is it sci-fi?). And again, I think about the end of creativity. Sure, I'm an advertising guy, I do creative all the time... but never free creativity. No worldbuilding, no adventures, no dramatic stories. Sure, I enjoy them, but my ability to create in that manner is dead. Kaputt. It's like a part of me is missing there, but it's alright. I can enjoy others' work, right? I can be a watcher in all these other places. I start and immerse myself in the pages in front of me...

I sigh deeply, as one is wanting to do at a certain age with a certain penchant for the dramatic. Maybe I just have too much air in my body. That is perfectly possible of course. Hypercapnia is no joke, and I never joke about oxygen levels. I brush my ear

again, so the music starts playing, drowning out the world again and allowing me to descend again into my book, as I follow the pilgrims on their accursed journey through a strange and confusing galaxy. It has started to rain outside, the water cascading down the window. It's warm inside, so I take off my jacket and take a sip of my still scalding hot coffee. Did I feed Luna? Luna is my cat you see, the only one who seems to calm me enough for my thoughts to go in different ways. After a moment's concern, I shrug. I'll be home within two hours at the most.

Time passes the way it always passes. Unnoticed. Sometimes it's like I'm in a timelapse, and this is one of those times. Though I don't notice it directly. It just happens and in hindsight, I can see myself sitting there as the world spins. The doorbell suddenly tingles intrusively. It's done so multiple times today, but for the first time I notice. A girl has entered, wearing a black coat and what I presume to be sports leggings and combat boots. She marches to the counter and orders. I pretend to keep reading, but something keeps drawing my attention to her as she takes off her jacket. Her green, woolly sweater falls to her upper legs. She moves to the seat opposite me and throws herself in the comfy chair, sweeping her hair to the right, revealing a short trim on the left side of her head and an ear with multiple piercings. A steaming mug of tea is in her hand. It splashes a few drops on the table when forcefully placed in front of her. She smiles at the hip bartender/clerk and whispers a word of thanks.

She whips out her phone, punches in a few messages and tosses it on the windowsill. In a smooth move, holding her head to the side, her hands dive into her back. They come up holding a book. Some romantic girls' book, I presume cynically. Girls that read are rare. At least, in public spaces like this. It's usually girls studying, with a laptop and earplugs in. That 'don't fucking bother me' stare. You know the kind. Or those who read the best sellers, but at least they still read. Most of the people seem to have given up on reading. The other day I read this article that said...

I look up in time to notice that she is looking straight at me now. Her book on her lap, but her lively pose indicates she is not setting down to read yet: "Hey, what are you reading?"

It takes me a few heartbeats to recover and answer....

Chapter 2 – Ugne

He looks cute. Slightly skater-outdoorsy chique, a little geeky. He could pass as a hipster, but his look truly seems to be his own look, not a costume that you can instantly see on each of the craft-beer-fixie-bike-beard-bro's tramping around the old town. His sweater doesn't even have holes in it. She clearly has the upper hand now. It's an old trick; feign disinterest long enough for the attention to slip and then reel them back in again. Not that she's that experienced in it, but the element of surprise is a strong one.

"Uhm... I am... reading... this book."

Cute, not quick on the up take

"Does it have a name?", she says, trying to only add a drip of cynicism to the question.

"Well, it's really... ehm... part of this series, you see... It's sci-fi, you probably don't know it."

One of those guys who needs some guidance, yeah? Ugne leans forward and lifts up the book: "Cool, Dune! I dig that movie; did you see it?"

A scowl appears on his face, but he represses it quickly. Ugne knows this type as well.

He is ready to talk to her about how the book is better and he is absolutely right, but she won't give away all her cards yet.

"If you think so, the book is worth reading for sure... It adds a whole new level of gravitas and depth to the story. Ehm... if you like such things."

"I do like such things. I'm Ugne, what do you go by when it's not Uhm?"

"Uhm... Eh.. no, of course. Gedas, hi. Do you come here often?"

"If you count working here as often... than yes, I am here often. Only to pay for my studies of course."

She raises her book, a dog-eared edition of Plato's Symposium.

"Philosophy?", Gedas utters surprised.

Oh fuck, Ugne thinks, that's a mistake. She smiles apologetically:

"Wish it was, I study psychology. Philosophy is only for wives with rich husbands."

"What?"

"I wish I could go study philosophy, but I need to find a job to. So... psychology it is.

What do you do?"

Gedas looks a bit lost at that, yet soon he seems catch on: "Advertising. I'm a creative, I guess. If you consider that creative." After a moment he sputters: "I'm reading this book right now though, if that's what you mean."

He is kind of cute, isn't he? Ugne smiles to herself. She has seen this guy sitting here before. Not interacting much with others, mostly staring through the window, reading his book, and sipping some obviously cold coffee. Lunging into the next topic, she starts:

"I like video games. I mean, I also like books... But sometimes my mind doesn't stop and video games are my jam."

He seems to ponder this for a moment: "Well, I've played a lot of Skyrim, it's definitely my favorite game. Have you played it?"

"You mean, that game from ten years ago? Is it that good?"

"Yeah, I do recommend it. It's such an amazing sandbox world, so many storylines to explore."

"Sounds good, I like games with storylines. Especially when you must make some ethical choices, philosophical dilemma's, and all. Have you read Plato?", she asks. She hopes he'll say yes. Games and sci-fi is fine, but some debt to him would be cool.

"I did, I did. I do actually read other things, just... this is sort of me time."

"Hiding from your girlfriend, or wife even?"

He scoffs: "Nothing like that, I just like it here. I like that the room is filled with books."

This answer seems to please Ugne. Who smiles at him and resumes reading. He seems to crawl back into his book too.

Her shift is about to start, but she wants to read a little. But the quiet doesn't come. Rest never really comes to Ugne, ever since she was a child. Her mind is always wandering. Tested, she was, but nothing came from it. She feels weirdly at ease with Gedas. She did sort of plan this, to be here a bit early and test the waters. See what he is about. She looks up from the book.

"So you read the Symposium right, what did you think of the Aristophanes bit?" He looks up, again as if pulled away from somewhere really, really far away. She almost feels bad about this, but hey... She is right here and he could make some more effort.

"Is that the bit about the split people? About how we are separated from our other half?"

"Yes, sort of. I mean, it explains this idea why we so desperately want to feel whole. That's why we search for the other half of us. And it says some stuff about being lesbian or homosexual too..."

"Well, it sounds nice..."

"Do you think it's true, that we have another half?"

Gedas seems to think for a minute, scoffs again: "I'm a guy sitting in a bookshop on a Saturday afternoon. If we have another half, I clearly have not found mine..."

"Not yet...", she says with a mischievous smile.

He blushes, the onset of the color on his neck is instantaneous.

"Ugne, are you about to get your ass behind the counter or what? I have to go."

The voice belongs to Justas, or J. as he likes to call himself. Gedas and Ugne both turn to face to the origins of the exclamation and both their eyes shoot daggers.

Ugne mellows: "Okey Justi-prusti, coming your way!" Then, turning to Gedas: "Sorry, got to go do the job."

"Will you... be here next week?", he asks. She struggles to not beam at him and his puppy eyes.

"Jup, same time, same place?"

"Same time, same place. I should go too. See you then?"

"See you, half-man."

Not knowing how to respond, Gedas nods, mumbles, and almost runs out. Ugne doesn't know how to stop smiling this evening.

Chapter 3 – Connection (Gedas)

It's a long week when you wait for Saturday to come around. I'm not sure what makes me so expectant of this casual meeting over books and coffee. Will she have forgotten about me next week? Is there something happening here? The days pass by in a blur and I wonder why I can't just move on for now.

You must think me mildly silly. I mean, I'm not bad looking. I actually can keep up with the hip inhabitants of my city, possibly due to working at a hip agency. You tend to adapt your outfit, follow trends, if you are in the middle of it. Yet, I feel I've sort of let go of that. I just wear stuff I like now and listen to music that interests me, but for some reason I seem to be pretty much on point with what's happening. Not sure if I'm much to look at, but I'm sort of fit. I don't hate seeing myself in the bathroom mirror. Not too much anyways. Everyone who spends a lot of time in their own company has found stuff to loathe about themselves.

I keep thinking of her. Ugne... Fire. I guess you could call me a calm person, I'm more of a water type. She is definitely more fire, and it has caught me unawares. I mean, it wasn't that long of a chat we had, but I felt some heat in my chest. My heart was beating a bit louder, it still does when I think of her. I'm a bit nervous even, I don't want to be that bumbling geek she must have thought I was.

The thing is, I have not had a very successful dating life. For a long time, I was overly attached to my short-term girlfriends. Not controlling or jealous, but more simply clingy. I couldn't bear the idea of us not being together and that stood in the way of us actually being together. Because when all you focus on is being close, you have no time to actually be close, right? So, soon things fell apart when we realized there was little spark between us and we sort of drifted apart. The last date I had was... 3 years ago? I've seen Egle for coffee a bunch of times since, but it's not like we'll get together. We are friends, that's I guess as good as it gets.

And suddenly (not really, I've been anxious the whole day and had a crappy workout) Saturday comes around and I find myself on the doorstep of the bookstore/coffee shop. I push open the door with an unexpected caution and stick my head in to peer around. Ugne is sitting on the couch. Cup of tea in front of her, book on her lap, and a steaming cup of coffee in front of the other seat on that same couch. She gestures for me to come over and sit down. Well, that's one less thing to worry about for me... She gets up and without a word gives me a hug, which I reciprocate with minimal visible awkwardness. That's another thing not to worry about...

"How've you been, Gedas?"

"Oh, you know..." I answer with uncalled for casualness. "Busy week, you know. Glad I didn't forget to be here in time." Ok, hold it cowboy, no need to get snooty about this. She sees right through me and pouts: "Oh, I should be so honored! What an amazing thing you found time to remember little me..."

My shoulder sink a bit: "Sorry, I'm a bit anxious about this. I'm not really good at... whatever this is. That was a bit too much, I've thought of nothing else today."

"Why? Am I scary or something?"

"No, not at all! It's just that I'm not sure what to expect. I think I try to prepare too much."

She looks me in the eyes for a second, chin towards her chest, before she responds:

"Well, Gedas. We have coffee... well, you have coffee. I have tea. We drink this beverage, and we talk. That's all you have to do. Can you handle this?"

I smile a wry smile.

"Anyways, I've moved on from Plato. This is a study book, I'm not sure what to read next. Who is your favorite author?"

I think for a second, chin in hand (how else can you answer this): "Not sure, there are so many different ones. I always return to Murakami though. I really like his work."

"Why?"

"Why what?"

"Why do you like his writing?"

"I guess I like the eye for detail in it. But also the way there is magic in the ordinary, how sometimes strange things shake up the world a little bit and everything changes. I guess that speaks to me. Sometimes things just stay weird. Other times the weird thing happens, but everyone pretends it didn't happen or something. Fact is, the world is ok either way, you just have to learn to accept things. Also, there are cats often. Have you read anything by him?"

"No, should I?"

"I don't know... I mean, I think his work is awesome but I'm not sure you'd like it."

"What do you recommend?"

I ponder for a moment, recommending books is heavy. I had the idea that she'd hate something I suggested. A book is a commitment, not a light past-time engagement.

"I guess... Norwegian Wood? It's sort of his romance novel, but it has plenty of strangeness in it."

"Is that like from the Beatles song?"

"Yes, it actually is. Murakami refers to music a lot in his books. I listened to a lot of cool stuff because of him."

"Metal too?"

"Not really... I guess, you'll find more jazz and stuff in there. Do you like jazz?"

She doesn't answer immediately: "I don't know... I've never really given it my time of the day, you know? Let me see if they have the book here. Advantage of the job, get to bring it back after."

She gets up and turns around: "You got me at cats."

An hour later, I step out. Ugne had to start her shift and me hanging on her lips on the other side of the counter feels weird. Maybe even a bit creepy? As I got up and waved as I approached the door, she called out to me: "Want to go for a walk next week? The weather should be nice." I nod: "Same time, same place?"

I feel warm on the inside.

The week after, we have a walk. A week later, we meet in the shop and a week after, we go see an exposition around the corner at the new Mo Museum, an art museum. We share a similar outlook on things it seems. We also have a similar weird kind of humor.

The week after, she's out of town to see family, but we've exchanged phone numbers. I message her a picture of the empty couch. "Wish you were here!", I add.

She messages back almost instantly: Well, I wish I was there too. But you can also ask me to go somewhere else, you know?

Light panic, what should I say? I choose to play dumb: Like what? What would you like to do?

Again a fast response: Well, I do eat. You could ask me to eat with you. Unless you eat with your mouth open. Then don't, I'll punch you.

I take some time to compose myself and a message. It takes me multiple false starts. I imagine her, enjoying this.

"Would you go out for dinner with me? Next Friday, 19.00, at this vegan place near Gediminas Tower? We can have a stroll before so meet on the square 18.00?"

It only takes a fraction of a second with my heart pounding in my throat, before I get a response.

"Finally... A date. C U there."

Chapter 4 – Static (Ugne)

When you want to listen to the sound of nothingness, there's not really any artist that beats Ulver. Their early work is perfect for a walk in the forest, their later ambient works are suitable for urban environments and stretches of nature a like. 'Not Saved' is playing in Ugne's headphones, as she makes her way to the restaurant. She has been hanging out with Gedas for a while now and everything seems smooth. No one has really made a move yet, which is strange. She's not had that with any other guys. Sooner or later, they will make a move. Usually sooner, and then she has to figure out if she's ready to go with that flow or loose the guy. Usually, it's a coin toss at that point. In any other thing, Ugne is very quick to decide, but not on people.

Trust... It's not something that comes easily to her. Maybe it's the neglect in her childhood. Sure, there was food on the table, there was school, there was a bed and even her parents were both there. But they didn't really ever seem to notice her as a person. As a human being with needs, ideas and desires. She was a task in a relationship, that appeared to be just as much a task in itself. Stuff to be completed. She knows that whatever she wants, it has to be more than that. Maybe this is it.

The sonorous tones in her ears may speak of sadness, but she is not sad. It's just the sound of something standing still. Contemplation? The moment before the jump of a very high diving board, the moment before you kick off on your bike to a new destination, a stillness the comes over you. This is a date and maybe, just maybe, something will change. She's not sure what she's looking for, but she hopes to find it.

She takes out her earphones a little bit away from the square. She needs to let go of that moment, she needs to make that jump now into being here and now. Carefully she turns the device off, and shoves it (slightly less ceremoniously) in her bag.

There he is, standing in the middle of the square looking mildly forlorn, gazing up at the statue of the old duke and his namesake. Feigning interest probably, not wanting to appear as lost as he obviously appears. She smiles as she walks up to him: "Hello stranger! Would you like the guided tour?"

A smile spreads over the entirety of his face as he turns towards her. He probably saw her coming before, it feels like it was already there, but she likes that he makes her feel it.

"Hey, so glad you could make it."

"Well, I sort of made you ask me out, so I'm glad you decided that was something you wanted." The joke is not entirely a joke, it would have broken her hopes if he had stood her up now. But she tells herself not to go there.

He opts to not engage her on that point; "Shall we go for a stroll?"

They hook arms and take a long stroll in the cold air on what is a crisp, clear evening otherwise. They talk about their lives, their passions. Here and there, Gedas points to some historical landmark. Ugne nods empathically but doesn't really listen. Not to his words at least, but she does hear his warmth. His passion and the way he talks to you as if you are in on all of it. This is a guy, who doesn't think anyone is below him, he thinks, and barely noticeably holds his arm a bit closer.

Later they sit down in the restaurant. As if do make time last, they order small sharing dishes, one after another.

"I'm sorry, I'm not a very fancy eater..." Ugne says, as she stuffs a bunch of sweet potato fries in her mouth.

"How would you eat these fries in a fancy manner?" he asks, smiling.

"I imagine one by one, with a small fork, elaborately chewing them and then mutter something like 'scrumptious!' to your equally fancy companions?"

Gedas promptly picks up a fork, lifts his pinky finger, and spears a fry on its pointy tips. Putting it into the corner of his mouth, he chews thoughtfully for a while.

"You know what, this is scrumptious. I'm sorry your unrefined palate can not appreciate this in the same manner."

"Shall I punch you with my unrefined fists?"

"Please don't put your unrefined hands on me!" he cries out, feigning horror. They both laugh, again.

"What do you want from life?" he asks, casually, as they finally are stuffing away a fantastic cake as desert.

That one she didn't see coming: "Phew... I'm not sure, I've just been taking it as it comes. I guess, I would like to settle down at some point. You know, have a long-term

relationship with the right person. Buy an apartment... or a house. I'm fine with either. Go on summer holidays with a suitcase, not a backpack..."

"When do you know you've found the right person?"

"I think you just know, don't you? You feel something magical. I guess that is love."

"Ah, love... I'm not sure I have the imagination for that."

"You don't believe in love?"

He thinks for a moment: "It's hard to explain, but I don't believe in the spark. I don't believe it just exists suddenly, like a spontaneous existence. I think I like the Kantian idea of love..."

"You had to drag some dead philosopher into this, didn't you?"

"The man may be dead, but the words are eternal..." Gedas somberly intones.

"Ok, what did that old bachelor have to say about this?" Ugne crosses her arms in what can be best described as her 'convince me' gesture.

"Kan is often misunderstood on love, but I think what he considers the optimal love is love as a verb, as an active choice where emotions follow actions. I mean, no spark keeps shining without work, right? So, if you build on love, as on a deep friendship, your system probably orients itself towards the other and love is the result. That's sort of it, I always struggled with that bit... It's like you need this internal realignment, that only happens if the entire frequency of things is right."

She thinks for a moment. That doesn't sound bad. It makes sense.

They talk for a while longer. He pays, she protests, he shows her the bill and they split it.

He shrugs: "I feel it's polite to pay. I didn't mean anything by it."

"It is polite, but unnecessary. It's not the nineties anymore."

"Fair enough, can I hand you your coat though?"

"You may... But just because you asked, the feminist in me couldn't bear you doing this because it is expected..."

Chapter 5 – Not Saved

They stand outside in the cold. The conversation stretched out for a bit longer. Both are silent now.

She steps forward. Only a small step, but suddenly right in his aura.

He looks at her. Not sure what to do. A goofy smile on his face.

"What do we do now?"

"What do you think?"

"Well, I think we should ehm... get going. Your bus is coming, my bus is coming..."

They both stand still. No one makes a move.

She lifts her heels off the ground, standing on her toes. He's not much taller than her, but still a bit. She leans forward.

He seems to grasp the idea and lowers his face towards hers.

Lips connect. They kiss. It's not a deeply passionate kiss, but it is full of surrender. Both lean into it, wanting it to work, wanting to make sparks.

Nothing happens.

No spark, no fire, no warmth spreading through her body.

They disengage, a mild shock on her face, disappointment? Confusion? His face goes through a range of emotions as well. What just happened?

There is a short silence.

"I should go. See you soon..." Ugne says. Lingering a moment longer.

"Ah yeah, ehm. Sure, get home safe please. Thanks for tonight." he says, scratching his head.

"You too..." she turns, walks and then rushes away.

He stands there. Snow falls. No one was saved.

He stares after her for a while. Then, he turns and walks away.

Chapter 6 – ON AIR

My visits to the shop are less frequent. Shorter, sometimes just to look at the books. Sometimes she is there, sometimes she isn't. We both nod, smile fake smiles. And when she looks away from me, turning to another customer, I feel my face contort with pain. Grief, sadness, loss, all at once in an expression that says absolutely nothing.

It was only a kiss. And yet, a kiss can tell you a thousand things and this one said nothing at all. It was empty, a disconnect. A call that never actually went through. The look of shock on her face must have been as obvious as the one on mine. Everything was right. Everything was a fit. And then nothing happened.

We have not really spoken. A sad expression and shrug from her, an apologetic smile from me, and we moved on. Yet it hurts, it feels like I lost the most precious thing. And so, life turns into grey again. Days become nights, nights become days, and I lose myself in a routine that does nothing. I read books, yet I never really read them. When I hear her talk to a customer, I turn up the volume on my headphones. I let The Angelic Process with their compressed sound and almost pummeling volume blast away all of the outside world. 'Weighing Souls with Sand' washes over me in all its grief and heaviness.

Here you would read my reflections in this time in the wasteland. Contemplations on the nature of things, of why I don't seem to be able to connect. But that requires a level of imagination of things being different, that I'm not capable of. When my thoughts

wander there, it's like they touch upon a void. On a nothingness, that I'm not sure I can even move into. It's like with black holes, I'm not sure if I can go there and come back again. At least, that's how it feels. I can get lost in darker music and in books that have desperation in them. I see her looking my way sometimes. It might be just me being hopeful, but I really think I see the same kind of grief in her eyes. At least, when she doesn't think I notice.

In time, we all start playing along again, and things normalize.

Though it did hurt when I saw her with him. Not a book guy, that's for sure. Not that I look down on people who don't read, but he clearly doesn't belong in a book shop. No wonder he waits for her outside, kisses her and then takes her arm. That's how she leaves. He doesn't enter. At least not in the first weeks.

It's strange how defeat can help clear your mind. He must be a better guy for her and sure I feel resentment and jealousy, but I'm not sure what for. I can't give her what she wants. So, one day, I approach the counter:

"Hey..."

"Hey G., how can I help you?" The smile she shows is part plastic, part genuine. Maybe she was similarly biting her lip, thinking how to break this spell.

"How are you? Like, how are things going for you."

Hesitation.

"I'm good I think, thanks for asking. I didn't know if I should have told you. I'm seeing someone. Not sure where it will go, but it's been fun."

"That fellow who picks you up after work? Looks like a nice guy."

"That's nice of you to say. I hope this is ok. We didn't... I mean, go anywhere. But I am really glad you're talking to me now."

"Don't you share some favorite authors?" Ok, hold it down, I can taste the venom in that sentence myself and so does she.

"Yeah, well, I could use a friend for that if you don't mind. Jonas doesn't really read much..."

I thought as much. Small victory for the bookish nerds here.

My face takes a reconciliatory expression: "Well, I would like us to be friends too. You are one of the few people I can actually hold a conversation with so that's fairly special."

"Well, you are a bit of an oddball..."

"How serious are you guys now? Am I not going to get punched for talking to you?"

"You should be fine. We're not that serious yet. Maybe I need to get used to this idea, I can't really feel calm around him. Not the way it is with you if you know what I mean?"

I nod, I do know. It also hurts a little, but not too much. I try to hold on to this as you would to the last shard of warmth of a campfire. Yet, I notice other clients cueing up.

"Well, I won't stop you from working now. We'll catch up some other time. Can we still hang out too? Sorry if that's odd to ask..."

She frowns at me: "C'mon dude, I'm a strong woman because my mother was a strong woman... she's the one who instructed me on my sword fighting. Can you imagine?"

"Aaah, I'm glad to hear that for two reasons..." I grin and return to the table.

Chapter 7 - Doom

It's been a couple of weeks and a lot has happened in Ugne's life. Her thesis defense is coming up and, obviously, her private life has been in ruins for a while. She's not been working much and has not seen Gedas. He wasn't there either. Zana, her colleague, told her after she walked into the shop: "But he was here earlier, and he seems very wound up about something. He was waving this poster around..."

It's easier sometimes to get lost in what needs to be done. Losing herself in studying, letting the 'get shit done' mentality overtake her for a while, it was good. She dries her hands and fiddles with her phone, putting on a different song. 'Autre Temps' by Alcest is the jam for today. Melancholic, wintery... She pours herself a cup of coffee and starts doing more of the dishes, while gently swaying to the music. There's a warmth there, and in her. Sure, she feels restless as ever, but the music temporarily takes it all away.

The door swings open. She smiles, she's seen him excited about things before. She talks a bit about this and that with Zana, until she leaves for home. Smart move Zana, she thinks, not a single dish washed. Time to get to work...

Later, as she puts away the last plates while simultaneously managing to get some coffee and cake out to guests, Gedas storms in:

"Hey Ugne... How are you?" Not waiting for an answer, he immediately continues: "So I was wondering if you'd like to go to this concert with me..."

"Oh, that sounds like just the thing."

"I mean, you don't have to if it's awkward with... you know... the boyfriend and stuff."

"No, I'll go."

"It's sort of loud stuff, a bit weird maybe."

"Sounds like that's just what I need."

"So, it's this band Earth and they play drone doom. So, it's really about a heavy, continuous sound so to say."

"Gedas, I'm coming."

"...and eh... what's interesting is that they see their music to have, like...universal vibrations, so that it's quite a meditative experience with the heavy sound. Like a sound bath..."

"Gedas..."

"I mean if you like to come, that would be cool, but don't feel like you need to."

"Gedas, I said I'm coming like 5 times now."

"Don't you need to check with Marc?"

"We broke up."

"..."

"..."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

Ugne is silent for a moment. What should I have told you? That I thought there was a tiny spark, but found out there was fire nor warmth at all? That our conversations died every 5 minutes? That I keep thinking of the guilt I feel about you and me? How do I fucking say all that in a way that makes sense? She smiles an uncomfortable smile. 'Ritchie Sacramento' by Mogwai is playing. She listens to the words for a moment. *"Disappear in the sun. All gone, all gone. It took a while just to think. Of home, of home..."*

"I'm telling you now. Ok?"

He hesitates, maybe he wants to argue the point? But then he nods and mumbles an apology.

She shrugs: "It was not meant to be I guess. So when, where, what to wear, dude?"

It seems that finally he has reached the conclusion she is actually saying yes. Which seems to take him totally by surprise, which she realizes is also kind of typical.

"So... ehm. I guess black? And it's next week on Friday night at Loftas. Is that good for you?"

"I'm there, meet you out front?"

"Right, I'll get the tickets. Thanks for joining. Going alone would suck."

"See you there then, now I have to work..." She smiles at him. He smiles back, waves and dashes out of the door, into the evening.

Chapter 8 – Cosmic Noise

A few weeks later, they meet up for the show in front of Loftas, the venue. There is a lot of excitement for this show, even though the audience is only a few hundred. Plumes of smoke drift upward in the cold night air. Phones illuminate faces, as people take their time to go inside.

As main man Dylan Carlson strums his guitar the room fills with noise. Heavenly noise, Ugne thinks; It's like I'm in a bath of radiant sound. I feel the vibrations in my chest, this is awesome! Both of them nod in unison to the pulsing rhythm, the riffs that come lazily, like waves. The frequencies vibrating in their very bones and inner ear.

Their hands brush in contact. What was that? Sparks? Both take a minute step away from each other, alarmed. They hadn't noticed they were that close to each other. Must be static electricity in the room.

The ocean of sound washes over them as the gig proceed. The musicians close their eyes as they repeat and repeat... Gedas follows suit, and so does Ugne. Bathing in the purifying sound. He barely notices her hand slipping into his.

As the song ends, they glance sideways and capture each other's eyes. Wow, Gedas thinks, he never really saw her eyes before. It's like seeing the sun rise and worlds build and fall apart in them. Endless pools of magic. Time passes. Eternity. A couple of seconds. It doesn't matter.

Have you ever had the feeling you look into depths unfathomable? But at the same time, you see a mirror that allows you to gaze right back into yourself?

Ugne stares back at him, staring deeply into the calmness of the sea, the depth that envelops her whole. There is no need to say anything else it seems, as she leans in. Standing on her tiptoes. He responds as if automatically and they kiss. Not the weird kind of kiss that happened before. They really kiss. Her lips feel like fire, like every sensory point is receiving it's maximum input. When they pull back a second later, his lips linger as long as possible, his expression completely overwhelmed. Again, eye contact. Eternally, momentarily, fleetingly, endlessly. He wraps her in his arm, gently, carefully... and they listen to the band play. Hip to hip, shoulder to shoulder.

You know those moments when you are with someone, and the whole world melts away? 'The Bees Made Honey in the Lion's Skull' is playing from the stage, the notes falling like drops of honey. A glowing light illuminates both.

It's about a frequency where you suddenly meet. About finally finding the tune, in tune, with the cosmic vibrations of the music, louder than what we can hear. Inaudibly changing the microscopic elements between you and me, within you and me. But there's more, there's a chemistry that enhances this effect. It's the individual frequencies suddenly syncing up. Something, unnoticed, has shifted completely. Ugne feels calm wash over her with the notes that wash like waves over them, while Gedas feels inspiration, stories, futures welling up in him.

They hold each other, hold on with an intensity. As their bodies connect, the frequencies vibrate together, minutely, in healing waves. Smiles on their faces, contentment. No questions, no worries, just the sheer bliss of the sound and the changing tides around them.

Later, they walk out of the venue together. In silence, never letting go of each others hands. Step by step, crunching snow the only sound with the silence of a city falling into a deeper slumber. Is it more quiet than normal?

As they get to the entrance of Ugne's apartment, he speaks up:

"Do you..."

She only nods, smiles. Not a smile that tells him a silly boy, but a smile that is full of warmth. Later her door falls in the lock and they are intertwined. Kissing, touching, with an intensity as if both have been waiting to finally drink after miles in the desert. Clothes scatter, when they suddenly pull apart:

"Music?", they say simultaneously, panting.

"You pick..." Ugne says, handing her unlocked phone to Gedas. She proceeds to pull of her pants on the edge of the bed, as he selects Jon Hopkins' 'Singularity' record.

Something about it feels... right. Wholesome, whole? His thoughts drift away, trying to grasp that strange switch of feelings inside.

She looks at him, her head tilted, as the music starts playing. After a minor eternity, she smiles... "Good, now come here please."

'Luminous Beings' is still playing when they lie next to each other, panting heavily. Face to face, touching as closely as possible.

"I feel like I've waited for you all my life", he says.

"Here I am, and here you are, and everything is right now. I've never felt so calm. There's only you and the music and I couldn't be happier."

"I guess we needed time."

"I guess so... I don't know, did you feel anything weird at the show?"

"I did not put anything in your drink and I made sure no one else did."

"You know what I mean..."

"I think I do."

Quiet, holding, closeness... peaceful.

"Ok...", she says. "My turn to pick a record."

She grabs her phone, selects 'Come My Fanatics' by Electric Wizard and grins at him.

"That's a nasty sounding record..."

"Exactly!", she says. And she pushes him over on his back on the bed...

Chapter 9 – As the love continuous

It's early morning, and I've just woken up. The sun is peaking through the window and illuminating her face. In peace, sleeping. I won't wake her quite yet. I think she needs to sleep for a while. Maybe for a longer while.

I made coffee, I put on a playlist on low volume and 'Tone Poem' by Fischerspooner is playing. An oldie, but a good tune for contemplation.

I have a lot in my head. It's like the flood gates are open. I can't wait to imagine a future together, to make plans. But I also have stories, characters, ideas...

I open her laptop. There's a guest account I've used before, so I log on. I open a Word file. A blank page. Potential and possibilities. I put on a playlist and as 'The Dead Flag Blues' by Godspeed You! Black Emperor goes beyond its gloomy intro, I start typing.

Eight pages in, I feel two arms wrap around me. 'Helvegen' by Wardruna is playing. She softly hums along.

"Coffee?"

"Yes. We have things to do."

"Do we?"

I simply turn around, right into her arms.