

for you

simona semenič
the last love letter

translated by barbara skubic

i write to you again
and again, you won't read
and again, you won't respond

and again, I will recycle
my words
my fantasies
my desires
myself inside you

may i lay my heart at your feet?

you inside me

*a stage
in its centre, a ladder
spotlights on the floor
cables
gaffer tape
tools
curtains
disorder
stage hands fixing the lights onto a pulley, a squad of them, three, four, perhaps six, climbing
upanddown the ladder, bringing, removing, prattling amongst themselves, where to point, what to
point, how to point, things like that
the spotlights shine then don't, pointed here now, there later
disorder*

*vanja knocks on an invisible door
urška reacts from behind the invisible door*

urška: yes, coming, just a moment

urška takes a few steps to the invisible door and opens it

urška: good evening, how can i help you?

*vanja: good evening, ehm, i'm your neighbour, ehm, down there, no, i mean, i live in the flat beneath
yours*

urška: yes?

vanja: this shoe fell onto my balcony, so i came to ask if it is perhaps yours

urška: what a pretty shoe, no, it is not mine, but it is beautiful!

vanja: oh, i'm sorry, then, i mean, i apologise for the intrusion, i just wanted to ask ...

*urška: very kind of you, thank you, i would want it to be mine, alas, it isn't, try the neighbour upstairs,
i think he lives alone, but he always has lady friends visiting, i mean ... well, you must understand*

may i lay my heart at your feet?

*mojca comes running to the edge of the stage
she comes running for the third time, so she'd be as breathless as possible
to tell her monologue breathless*

*mojca (breathless): I'm watching myself behind some table, among some people, i see myself observe smartly, listen smartly, speak smartly
i see myself trying to be not just smart, but also beautiful
except in that one moment of very intense thinking, when the thought pierces me – you don't have to be beautiful, you can relax a bit, the effect will be better if you're just smart right now
i'm watching myself behind some table, among some people and i feel neither beautiful nor smart*

*mojca, breathless, tells her monologue about watching herself behind some table among some people, although she hasn't the slightest idea why she should say this monologue breathlessly when she observes herself how she's trying to make impression, she's never breathless, the breathless one is the she who desperately tries to be beautiful and smart, this she, observing her is just somewhat volatile and shapeless in all that
anyways, you don't question directions, you go and you do and end of
you're beautiful and smart and even breathless, if that's what they order
mojca at the portal once more tells her monologue, breathless*

*mojca (breathless):
I'm watching myself behind some table, among some people, i see myself observe smartly, listen smartly, speak smartly
i see myself trying to be not just smart, but also beautiful
except in that one moment of very intense thinking, when the thought pierces me – you don't have to be beautiful, you can relax a bit, the effect will be better if you're just smart right now
i'm watching myself behind some table, among some people and i feel neither beautiful nor smart*

you're here
so close that i'm holding my breath
i'm watching at myself trying to not hold breath

*a horse-drawn carriage driver held for driving under influence, novo mesto
judges deliberate the death of a 10-month old baby, ljubljana
a child finds a bomb, postojna*

vanja: oh, i'm sorry, then, i mean, i apologise for the intrusion, i just wanted to ask ...

urška: very kind of you, thank you, i would want it to be mine, alas, it isn't, try the neighbour upstairs, i think he lives alone, but he always has lady friends visiting, i mean ... well, you must understand

vanja: i'll try, thank you for your kindness

urška: oh, by the way, i'm urška, it was nice meeting you, nowadays it's all ... how to put it, we live next to each other and we don't even notice each other, right

vanja: I've noticed you ... i mean, i see you often ... i mean, i see you going up or down ... well, i'm vanja

he could be vanja
he could be grega
he could be izidor
he could be uroš
he could be simon

urška: do stop by for coffee some time, right now, i really don't have time

right now, this moment, i don't have time
not today
don't you try it

urška: but perhaps tomorrow ...

perhaps tomorrow

urška: no, no, tomorrow won't work

tomorrow won't work

*gunshots mow down a forty-three-year-old from ljubljana, ljubljana
charges filed for arms dealing, celje
killed his wife and turned himself in, kočevje*

and then my lips on yours
yours on mine
right now this moment, one moment

urška: ehm, no, not this week ...

at first there was a single grey hair on my head
no, no, i'm lying, at first there was a single grey hair, a single grey hair among the black ones on my labia

urška: perhaps next week ...

and then one grey hair on my left temple

urška: oh, no

she could be nina
she could be sonja
she could be slavica
she could be erika
she could be iris

urška: oh, no, next week i'm not in slovenia

then there was another grey hair on my left temple

urška: well, one of these days, i mean

one of these days

urška: at some point, when i have time

when there is a single black hair on my head

no, no, i'm lying, when there's a single black hair, a single black hair among the grey ones on my labia

urška: when we have time, we can meet and have coffee or so and perhaps get to know each other better

vanja: right, i'll go upstairs to try the neighbour, goodbye!

urška: goodbye!

urška closes the invisible door

*vanja lingers a spell in front of the invisible door
perhaps fidgets*

you are here

and it's as if you weren't

and it's as if i weren't

may i lay my heart at your feet?

vanja leaves

steps

spotlights are turned off

darkness

prattle

and then the prattle stops, too

nina lights a candle in her hand

the flame illuminates her gently

nina: you know, my colleague's daughter, a nurse, i mean, a student-nurse, she assisted an operation on monday, an intervention, you know, and then the doctor called her fat, can you imagine and she's not fat at all, far from it, she's completely normal, you know, beautiful, in fact, a beautiful girl, really, and then he said, that doctor who was operating, he said to others, right, he said, do you think her tits are real or fake, and he looks at her and says, i can't decide, are they real, are they not real, best i check, and then he starts feeling her tits

vesna lights a candle in her hand

the flame illuminates her gently

vesna: what is wrong with people these days?

silence

flames of candles

vesna: and what did she do?

i call you, you pick up, you need me so, you say
i need you so, i say, i need you so

nina: nothing, what could she do, she's still a student, she's still studying, she'll need a job one day, no

vesna: what is wrong with people these days?

i need you to love me

nina and vesna blow out the candles

darkness

silence

coughing

one of the stagehands walks into a ladder

bloody hell

bloody hell

prattle

a spotlight is turned on

another spotlight is turned on

vanja knocks on the second invisible door

rings the invisible bell

david responds from behind the invisible door

david: bloody hell, what is it?

vanja: the downstairs neighbour

david comes to the invisible door and opens it

you're so close that i could smile at you
i watch myself trying not to smile at you

i offer escort service to a wealthy lonely man, 5 to 7 days every two months in a hotel at home or abroad, in return for travel expenses and full board and 8 hours per day for myself (nonnegotiable), i am an attractive woman in her forties, also able to have conversations

so close that i could touch you

david: yes, what is it?

vasja: this shoe, is it yours?

david slams the invisible door into the face of actor one, who could be vanja

david, while walking away, mumbles into his beard

david: what is wrong with people these days?

vanja stares at the door

david, still walking away from the invisible door: bloody hell, people are crazy, crazy, he comes to my door with a bright green woman's shoe with a seven-inch heel, if it's mine, bloody hell, there's nutters everywhere nowadays, including my building, bloody hell, what an idiot

*vanja leaves
steps*

i need you to love you

*hit a cyclist and ran, jesenice
smuggled cigarettes in a container, koper
a bus crashes into a pedestrian, maribor*

*elvira remembers
elvira is standing in the kitchen, a plate in one hand, a tea towel in the other, facing away from the half-empty dishwasher
she's watching as if she were watching the wall
she's watching as if she didn't see
because she doesn't see
because she remembers
elvira, in the kitchen, with a plate in one hand and a tea towel in the other, remembers*

notorious thoughts dictate the answer that makes me stare through the just washed window, to see the question that disturbs my sleep whenever i succeed in finishing a day i start

you were saying?

*i was standing on the platform, endlessly, at least it seemed endlessly, i was standing on the platform and waiting for the train that was supposed to bring you
it was running late, it seemed it would never bring you, that you'd not come at all
perhaps it came in the meantime and i didn't notice it
perhaps the train stopped, perhaps you got off
perhaps you saw me and i saw you, you smiled, i smiled, you embraced me, i kissed you and perhaps we left the platform holding hands
but i haven't noticed it and am thus still waiting for you at the platform
while you and that other me are at home, fucking without restrain*

you were saying?

household chores and breast cancer

*vanja knocks on the third invisible door
rings the invisible bell*

on the other side of the invisible door, aleksander is sitting in his armchair and staring at the television set

*aleksander: someone's knocking, go get the door
on the other side of the invisible door, helena by the cooker*

helena: i'm just frying up the wiener schnitzel, you go, please

aleksander: i can't go, can't you see it's a minute to the end of the game, you go

helena: darling, please, the meat will burn and you'll be angry again

aleksander: fuck, haven't i told you it's a minute till the end, stop fucking with me, you stupid broad, you and your schnitzel

*so close that i could touch you
i watch myself trying not to touch you*

aleksander: fuck, haven't i told you it's a minute till the end, stop fucking with me, you stupid broad, you and your schnitzel, i don't like it anyway, you're frying it for your own fat ass

household chores and breast cancer

*breast cancer is the most common cancer in women of the developed world
a study that ran simultaneously in nine european countries, and in which the scientists followed more than two hundred thousand women, showed that physical activity, linked to ironing, cooking, cleaning and other daily household chores, protects from breast cancer significantly better than occasional athletic activity*

aleksander: fuck, haven't i told you it's a minute till the end, stop fucking with me, you stupid broad, you and your schnitzel, i don't like it anyway, you're frying it for your own fat ass fuck, let me watch the game in peace, no, no, no, nooooo!

i need you for love

household chores and breast cancer

*breast cancer is the most common cancer in women of the developed world
a study that ran simultaneously in nine european countries, and in which the scientists followed more than two hundred thousand women, showed that physical activity, linked to ironing, cooking, cleaning and other daily household chores, protects from breast cancer significantly better than occasional athletic activity
in women who did intensive housework for 16 to 17 hours per week, the cancer risk decreased, on average, by 30 percent
dusting, cooking, laundry, and hovering decreased the risk also more than heavy physical work (cancer epidemiology biomarkers and prevention)*

you were saying?

*suzana and nejc are doing the tango
the spotlights are turned off*

*they dance in the dark
bloody hell*

bloody hell

the spotlights are turned back on, they turn on and off, the hustle, the bustle, suzana and nejc are doing the tango

aleksander: fuck, haven't i told you it's a minute till the end, stop fucking with me, you stupid broad, you and your schnitzel, i don't like it anyway, you're frying it for your own fat ass fuck, let me watch the game in peace, no, no, no, nooooo! oh, for fuck's sake, fucking hell, you stupid cunt, this is all your fault, hey, i'll get there now and fucking smack you

helena: honey, please, don't get upset, i'll go get the door

aleksander: too late now, they've lost, they've lost because of you, you stupid broad

*fast steps, wrestling, fall
muted swearing
fast steps
fast unlocking*

helena (breathless): oh, neighbour vanja, it's you, good evening, what brings you here?

vanja: ummm, good evening, good evening

aleksander (from the inside of the flat): who is it?

helena: the first-floor neighbour, vanja

aleksander: oh, fuck

aleksander gets to the invisible door

aleksander: good evening, neighbour, what brings you here?

vanja: i found this shoe on my balcony and i thought, perhaps it fell from your place

aleksander: let me see, hmm, yes, nelly, isn't this your shoe?

*and then my lips on yours
yours on mine
for a moment
for a single moment
it's not the right moment, because the clock will strike midnight any second now
and i have to go
i have to go
i'm going
i don't even have time to lose my shoe on the stairs*

suzana and nejc are doing the tango

nina and vesna light the candles

vesna: what is wrong with people these days?

*he
has noticed
just now
this moment
this second
he has noticed
has noticed and has gone silent
he has gone silent
because he has run out
has run out
run out of words
because he's noticed
has noticed
and has remember
he has remembered
and it has passed, this moment
this second
passed
and yet
it was etched in him, this moment when he remembered
was etched in him*

a study that ran simultaneously in nine european countries, and in which the scientists followed more than two hundred thousand women, showed that physical activity, linked to ironing, cooking, cleaning and other daily household chores, protects from breast cancer significantly better than occasional athletic activity

you were saying?

and in me

nina and vesna blow out the candles

suzana and nejc are doing the tango

vanja: i found this shoe on my balcony and i thought, perhaps it fell from your place

aleksander: let me see, hmm, yes, nelly, isn't this your shoe?

helena: yes, perhaps it is, let me have a look

helena goes to the cabinet, which can also be invisible, and peeks inside

helena: it is indeed mine

aleksander takes the show from actor one, who can be vanja

aleksander: thank you, neighbour vanja, and good night!

aleksander slams the invisible door into the face of actor one, who can be vanja

vanja is standing in front of invisible door

*ran the car into the façade of the parliament, ljubljana
consumed alcohol and viagra, then fell of a chair lift, velika planina
a new sabotage at the coal-fired power station, šoštanj*

may i lay my heart at your feet?

*aleksander: vanja, eh? vanja, eh? you go downstairs for some bonking, while i toil away, eh? and then
you're so stupid that you forget a shoe*

*vanja is standing in front of an invisible door
suzana and nejc are doing the tango*

*aleksander: a shoe that i bought you for our anniversary! eh? is it nice to bonk this fatso, eh? is it
nice? do you enjoy it? well, now, you floozy, say something!*

helena: aleksander, come on, don't be paranoid, i don't even know him

aleksander: vanja, the first-floor neighbour, i don't even know him

and now imagine the two of us, old
no, no, older
yes, like this
we're old, grey
no ,no greyer
yes, like this
i cook for you every day
every day breakfast, lunch, dinner
i love you
no, no, i love you more
yes, like this
and you love me
yes, like this
but you don't like my food, no matter how hard you try
and you have tried, all these years, until we went completely grey, but if you can't, you just can't
if you at all can, before every meal i cook for you, you eat secretly
i can't understand how you can eat so little and be so plump, but i have no idea that you gobble food
behind my back
you feel a little guilty, a little like you're cheating on me
which, bloody hell, you are, you've been cheating on me all these years
with chocolate croissants every morning you take the dog for a walk

with portions of stuffed peppers, spare ribs, kebabs, lasagne and what not when you run errands in town before noon
the evenings are harder, because we usually go for a walk together
but sometimes you manage
can you imagine?
yes, like this

this is not the last love letter
this is not a love letter

may i lay my heart at your feet?