

SINK, KRÖLLGASSE 10-12, 1150 VIENNA
SEPT 19 2026, 2-6 PM
TEXT BY HARRIET GILLIES

Hey Luka,

Do you remember what you told me when I asked you what it was like to give birth? I wondered if being pregnant felt like the longest acid trip of your life, if you remembered the excruciating pain, if the pain opened a portal to a new dimension of existence, something beyond human?

You told me that when you were pushing your baby out from inside you, that you could not tell which sensation on the inside of your body was her, and which sensations were your organs shifting, and that you felt like your efforts to get your baby out were going to also push all of your organs out of your body. You told me that you were certain that you were going to kill yourself by turning your body inside out through your own sheer force.

I remember thinking, wow that is so fucking hardcore.

(Which surprised me because you didn't seem like a hardcore person...!) But then a few weeks later it was early spring and we were walking to swim in the still freezing Baltic Sea and you told me that when you were a kid you pissed into little cups and tried to sell it to strangers at a lemonade stand, which I thought, for a small child, was very hardcore.)

Your description of giving birth reminds me of what happens when you take the skin off a sausage. Without its container it is rendered a complete failure, completely unrecognisable, an unsightly mess of scraps. This must be why they say no one likes to see how the sausage gets made.

Do you say this in German? In English we say, 'Nobody wants to see how the sausage gets made', to talk about the unpleasant or messy aspects of a transformation or process that are not usually made public, or that people do not want to be made public.

But I'm here for it, Luka. I think a lot of us are. I want to see everything, guts and all. What's a little piss and blood amongst us girls? A little milk, (manufactured or otherwise)? After all, isn't that all we are? Women and people who give birth come to understand this better than anyone... that we are just "*meat... born to make meat*".¹

Once we degrade ourselves to the status of some loose scraps of meat on the floor, we can surrender to our body's ability to swell, leak, drip and rupture in service of THE MIRACLE OF LIFE. Overriding our brains completely, we tear ourselves, by our own force, from front to back, and like cells merging, our holes combine into something bigger than the sum of their parts. Not just a bigger hole, but an opening. An opening through which new life is born.

And any opening for life, of course, brings with it death. Out of this big hole (the biggest) comes the death of this new life and the death of who we once were. Right behind the baby, out, too, crawls Death. Still wet. Compressed and ugly. With Death holding our hand and this opening between our legs, we face a sustained confrontation with mortality that fundamentally transforms our relationship to existence on a physical, social, and spiritual level.

¹ Charlotte Wood, *The Natural Way of Things* (Allen & Unwin, 2015).

It's all about the opening. It's about opening.

They are scared of the new self that emerges from the big hole. They fear anyone that can withstand such annihilation. Fearful of the person who can say, *"All right, then, annihilate me; that other self was fiction anyhow."*²

As I write this letter to you, (and as a person who is trying to have a baby without a sausage in the mix, so to speak), the sperm that I hope to have syringed into my uterus next month by a medical professional of the Public Health System is sitting frozen in a tiny, labelled vial in very fancy freezer undergoing its mandatory 3-month quarantine before they deem it worthy of trying to seduce my ovaries. I don't understand how they can take something that is so alive and make it so frozen, (for decades if necessary), and then let the sperm thaw, slowly bringing it back into the temperature of the living, and then use it to start human life.

Is my baby going to be like one of those apples you buy at the supermarket that seems to have been freshly plucked off its tree, but in fact has been sitting frozen in another fancy freezer, a sealed room where the oxygen is lowered and the carbon dioxide is raised to put the apples into a sleep-like state for 9-12 months before being heated back up and laid out in aisles of extravagant pyramids under the bright fluorescent lights? I probably ought to feel betrayed by this but honestly, they taste the same to me...

This frozen white liquid that will go on to swim into my uterus, and push inside one of my organs. It will collaborate with my ovaries to create the entirely unique DNA of a new human who, in time, will be pushed out of my body and immediately start shitting and bleeding, learn to see colour, walk around, fall in love, come up with their own ideas...

I will never walk down the frozen aisle of the supermarket the same way again. Or the fresh food aisle, for that matter.

"Fresh".

Wow

What a miracle supermarkets are.

What a miracle it is to have a body.

Send photos of SINK. Tell your baby that her best friend misses her and sends lots of hugs and fist bumps from unfathomably far away right down near Antarctica.

Big Love,
Harriet xxxx

² Sarah Ruhl, *100 Essays I Don't Have Time to Write* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014).