

THE BOOK OF



DIDO

INSTRUCTIONS

The adO/Aptive collective created a multi-perspective script to be performed by its readers and visitors of the exhibition Speculative Speculum. Dido, Hunter, Maria and Genesis – the four characters – are placed in times as divergent as 80 BC and 30 after X and encounter each other in dialogues. Their flirts, jokes and moans become playable only through the “stage directions” specific to each character’s time.

Each book represents the story of one of the four characters we have created. All of them meet once. You may play these stories in order or mixed together. These are dialogues, so take turns at reading out loud to each other, but be aware, all characters live in a different timeline, so there may be variations in what they understand from each other.

A maximum of 4 people can perform this play.

TO **PLAY** follow these steps:

0: Pick a book. (you have already done this)

0.1: find at least another person to play with you
let this other person pick one of the other 3 books
we have prepared.

1: Before you start, take a deep look at the cover of this book,
concentrate on the 3 dots in the middle of the portrait.
Gaze at it for at least 30 seconds without blinking.

1.1: now look at the wall and blink very fast,
do you see your character?

g o o d

2: Now you are ready to dive into the life of **Dido**.
Read the dialogues that include the characters of whom someone is
holding their book in their hands.
Your lines are in black and theirs are grey in this book.
If everyone is here, then you will have to decide who’s story will told first.

3: once you have finished playing **Dido**,
you can put the book back and pick another one. Have fun!

ABOUT DIDO

- **Dido** is a fierce pirate.
- **Dido** did not want to become a pirate, was a merchant before.
- **Dido** is the queen of their ship, and their ship is the ocean.
- **Dido** has an anchor tattooed on their shoulder.
- **Dido** was 6 when they were found by a greek merchant boat.
Since then, they never felt land beneath their feet. Carthage, Syracuse, Neapolis, Rome, Malaga, Alexandria, Sparta, Salamis, Rhodos, Ephesos, Byzantion, Odessos, Tyras; all stayed at bay from the feared Dido.
- They'd seen and done it all.
- No architecture could impress **Dido**. The fluidity of the Ocean kept her at bay from ever entering a building. It's not that it did make her nervous, or she would miss the ocean. It just felt empty and finite, boring.

Dido sails the sea at around the year 80 BC when:

- + After nearly 500 years of existence, the Roman Republic was reaching its end.
- + Pirate groups from the Mediterranean were very common and a threat to Roman hegemony in the area.
- + In 83 BC L. Cornelius Sulla, a consul and general, marched with his army to Rome and became dictator.





1 : Vengeance



for Dido

with Hunter

p.6

The pirate ship finally reached land after a few weeks of raiding at sea. It was high time to sell or exchange their loot at the harbor market, where vessels sailing under Greek, Phoenician and Persian flags forgathered. All of the pirate ship's crew was withered from the biting heat at sea and food that was not conserved in salt or swimming in oil had become scarce.

Leaving the ship, a man with a sharply trimmed beard and a long linen cloth approaches Dido to sell her what he explains to be a very special artifact. It has a phallic shape and is of a completely transparent material. Dido has never seen something like it before but curiosity got the better of her.

However, the grin on the man's face as Dido hands him a gold necklace in exchange for the artifact makes her suspicious. The merchant disappears in the tumult of the market and moments later Dido realizes he must have sold her some junk. This thing stinks. She expected this swindler to immediately take off but she manages to keep an eye on him roaming about the square.

There is only one way to get even with this con man and remain inconspicuous – use someone else to avenge the scam.

From afar Dido observes the crowd slowly moving between the market stands. She spots a playfully dressed creature perusing the nut shack. Despite his quirky looks Dido discerns a dark soup boiling behind the whites of his eyes. A sly old dog is just what she needs for the job. Dido gesticulates with her arms to get his attention.

DIDO

Hey! Hey, you! Yes, it's you I'm talking to. Come closer!

Hunter's attention is immediately caught and he starts walking towards Dido, with an interested look on his face.

(whispering) Did you see the guy behind you?

(hushing) Don't turn around!

Hunter looks around, confused.

DIDO

(calm voice, slowly)

This guy over there just slid half a kilo of almonds in his left pocket and half a kilo in his right. He's definitely not gonna pay, look at his sweaty temples.

Dido knows how to pull the right strings. She could literally smell that Hunter could not tolerate corrupt people and has a strong sense of justice. With him as the perfect tool, this brazen scammer will be paid back. Dido will convince Hunter that she saw the guy stealing almonds and that he must be reported to the market guards.

HUNTER

(eyeing the guy)

Uhm yeah... Soo..?

DIDO

Listen. If you help me stop this guy and report him to the guards, I'll reward you with a precious gift. A precious artifact... *(to herself)* It'll get high by getting low.

HUNTER

Yeah, you think I have nothing better to do right, just cause you look cool I'm your dog now, right... *(mumbling more to himself than to Dido)* yeah, nothing better to do ha, me, nothing better to do. I AM working, I AM a provider, a breadwinner all of my own, and this thing thinks I ain't got nothing better to do... *(mumbling)* OK. OK. *(taking a deep breath)* This is not for you, you pierced peacock, nothing to do with you, OK, just to be sure. *(sighing)* But damn, I can't look at this mofo any longer, look at those slumpy moves. Useless! *(half-shouting in the direction of the dealer)* USELESS! *(lower)* A useless thing thinking it can eat without working? *(looks at Dido)* And who's gonna pay for our retirement, ha? Me, right, my whole body is gonna pay or what, I am literally working my ass off, and you're all treating your lazy peaches, ha?

DIDO

(encouraging)

Exactly, my friend, exactly, who's gonna pay? That's the whole point, that's what I'm saying.

Trying to sound both convinced and convincing, Dido is shivering at the threatening sound of Hunter's rant, but decides to go on with her pitch.

You see these guards lingering over there? Why don't you just walk over and tell them what's going on.
(calmly) They're gonna take care of it, just believe me.
Don't worry.

It worked. Hunter gives Dido a puzzled look and then approaches the guards.

After receiving Hunter's complaint, the sworded soldiers encircle the market area. The guards shout commands and seconds later four soldiers approach the alleged stealer, surprise him from behind and violently drag him towards the exit road. They chain him up and throw him into a wooden waggon with a "Woosh!" to banish him from the market area.

His scream can be heard, steadily decreasing in volume as the cart moves away: "Why are you taking me???? What did I do? Don't touch me! Stop pushing me! I didn't steal anything!! What is going on????"

HUNTER

(raising eyebrows, talking to himself)

Peachy fucking keen... He totally deserved that, what an entitled, grody little brat??

A smile starts to form on Dido's face. She waves Hunter over again and asks him to come with her to the deck of the pirate ship where she stored the object that was sold to her. Dido unlocks it and waves Hunter over.

DIDO

Now come here! Your present is in this box.

Hunter approaches the box and takes what's inside.

HUNTER

(laughing)

Thanks, sister! I've actually been meaning to get one this size!

Dido ignores his comment and leaves. Her mission is accomplished – everything was arranged perfectly and even if this fraud of a guy selling her some useless glass piece might never connect the cause with the effect he now got what he deserves.





2 : Termites' Mound



for **Dido**

with **Maria**
p. 9

Dido draws the ship to the shore. She secures a column knot to hitch the ship to the pier, but in her head she runs through the movements to complete a hog's tie and a lark's head double column with the chafed rope. Rope on solid surfaces is a chore, no give, no traces. Dido is taken aback by the sudden splashes on the otherwise unremarkable surface of the narrow river. Sharp bony structures pierce through the brown and green waters of the Svratka. Sterlets, of course.

MARIA

Uh.

Dido weaves through the crowded streets brushing against vats of beans, grains and dried fruit. A day without a date is a day wasted. Dido digs her hand in a barrel of dried figs, flicking fruit in her mouth on the way to the kiosk. The shelves of the stand ache for plunder. Closing in on the familiar target, Dido notices a delicate hand tacking a piece of paper on the display.

DIDO

What dexterity there is to ya hand!

MARIA

I have no history with wrinkles - with time, I do! If you can read, just look at my ad.

DIDO

Man, is that classism I hear through your pointy nose?

MARIA

The richest kids wear tattoos, so rest your breath.

DIDO

(reading Maria's dating ad)

Inventor w

Patina seeks

Valentina's Seduction

Jesus died for our sins. Jesus was the son of a virgin - Christians believe redemption is, at its conception, free of sex. How ridiculous! I sense a problem, a gross Miss Understanding, a Miss Exegesis! I, Maria, am secular. I am also smart. I discovered a watch that can change the perception of time. For pleasure this means: endless comings, abundance of touch without the threat of the next minute taking it away. Now, I have lost the watch along with the person who made its use necessary for my pleasure to burgeon. As for now, I am ready to expose myself fully to the fragility of the moment, the fine precarity of all the desires strung as finely as the corridors of a termite mound.

Be my Valentina!

MARIA

(excited)

Hello, Valentina!

DIDO

What tha fuck! Too much...

MARIA

Oh c'mon.

DIDO

(contemplating)

Back to the dexterity of ya hand... would ya lend it for a little hustle?

Without waiting for an answer, Dido draws out a sword and turns it at the clerk. Dido is taken aback by Maria's sudden ease and comfort while the inventor gleefully snatches a pack of coated nuts.

DIDO

(still pointing the gun at the clerk, turning to Maria)

Nooo, for real?

MARIA

(fixes her towel turban)

I work on my terms, and I didn't have lunch. If you want something, you'll have to tell me straight up.

DIDO

The dare's on! Kind of getting hooked on your odd manne-risms. First dare: Let's see you pick me up!

Confused, Dido feels Maria approaching her and reaching her arms around her thighs. In an awkward flex, Maria tries to lift Dido to rest on her shoulders.

DIDO

(resisting)

For real? I'm sure you can do better than that, try harder!

MARIA

Are you a parking ticket? Because you've got FINE written all over you.

DIDO

Jesus, you must be a hell of a regulated person.

No laws
for me
at sea,
pussy-paws!
Try again,
Water hen!

MARIA

The sense of a vital sex cut through my unhappy euphoria,
my confused guilt over the man I had killed lost.

DIDO

(seduced)

Uuuh, now we're talking...

Still pointing the blade of the sword at the clerk, Dido starts to feel hot. Many merchants with linen wrapped around their torsos have gathered around the scene. Dido, eager to fuck, hastily points the sword around her for everyone to get lost. The crowd disappears, the sun plummets into the Svratka. Roses rush out of the cobblestone's cracks and what is now a desert landscape makes Maria's and Dido's bodies glow.

We have about fifteen minutes until the legionnaires get here. Move closer, I wanna dip into this termite mound you promised.

Dido drives herself into the opening. Both descend. Lying on the floor, Dido locks legs with Maria and softly gathers the skin of Maria's back into folds. As the thin trace of saliva sinks into the skin, their vulvas touch and rub, like two infused truffles growing in rich forest soil. Under them, a pond condenses, and starts to rock them into a phantasmagoric globe of desire.



Wet Sand



Dido

Dido is exhausted. When they heard the legion coming to chase them off, Maria and Dido disentangled from their leg-lock. Maria quickly climbed into her carriage, blowing a kiss at Dido using only her middle finger while the pirate had to run for her life. Until now, Dido runs and runs and wades across lagoons and runs and runs. She wouldn't find herself in such a situation normally, but today, something is off, she isn't on the top of her game. She turns corner after corner trying to find an escape and then she hears it: the sound of waves crushing in the distance. She follows that sound, knowing she would have the upper hand in the ocean. The sea is Dido's turf, nothing could happen to her there.

Dido reaches the shore and collapses. Her body falls to the ground and just her head lands in the water. The pressure is instant, the water sucks in the rest of the body, scratching it against the stony ground. Dido is submerged and speaks to herself.

DIDO

It has been a good life, I can't complain. My ways are not respected but I made myself into a legend. I rose from the bottom and made my way to the top. There is no flag that does not tremble at the sound of my name.

With every word coming out of Dido's mouth her body sinks deeper and deeper.

DIDO

There is no horizon that escapes my gaze.

Dido reaches the bottom. She starts bleeding from the constant friction between her skin and the wet sand.

DIDO

Look at what has become of me, the once fierce and feared Dido now tricked twice on the same day. First I buy some glass doodad from a scammer and then I fall for a bougie fuck girl. The constant sea voyage, the thrill of navigation has made me into this despicable self. Bleeding to death at the bottom of the ocean.

She reaches up to touch the marks and tattoos on her arms, and a look of disgust crosses her face.

DIDO

These brands and signs were once meaningful. Now they are just a sad reminder of all that I no longer can be. *(voice wavering)* But what can I do without them? These very dear memories are my story written in tides. How could I survive without the sea?

Dido's wounds stop bleeding. The water starts to turn red and shimmers in a purple hue.

DIDO

(voice growing more urgent)

Forsaken be thou, who has forgiven. Blessed be thou, who forgets.

What colored the water now bundles into strings. The red and purple particles form fine lines of a different liquid. The strings enter Dido's wounds and slowly start to pull her up.

DIDO

(out of breath)

A land, a family, a castle...

Dido hears the sound of waves like a distant whisper. She follows this soothing sound somewhere to the back of her mind.

As she regains consciousness, she finds herself collapsed at the shore, her face in the wet sand. The crashing water becomes more ominous. Dido stands up and escapes the sound.

DIDO

I am sick of being a spectator to shipwreck. In my prayers there is no more sea, just landfills I could contain.

Dido's tattoos start to itch and burn. Now she knows what to do.





3 : Nero Leek



for Dido

with Genesis

p.6

80 BC. Winds are whistling as they blow through the gap between the sweaty thighs of a dozen legionnaires. Just outside the city walls, they squat atop little stones as they survey the coast. Dido, determined to find Genesis after a last voyage of frivolous looting, glides down a rope of tiny tissues: done with all the piracy! To get by the guards' watch, Dido plunges into the sea, resurfacing in a coat of salty sea foam. "Just a passing cloud on the horizon", the legionnaires think as they nibble on olives. And so Dido coco-onishly embarks towards the misfits' dwelling behind some bushes, where Genesis entertains a tattoo removal parlor.

DIDO

Fuck, I have no feeling of extremities. Am I the porch of this house?

Dido forcefully pushes the copper door to enter the parlor.

GENESIS

Yeah, welcome. Genesis. What is the purpose of your visit?
I smell color.

Dido is immediately intimidated by the owner of the tattoo parlor, of whom it is said that they are nothing but a tall drink of water. Dido feels a pull and starts speaking.

DIDO

What once was bright color is now to my senses nothing but the gruesome mark of a broken youth, and the sickening promise of the castle. As I was drifting into the waters, my body was filled with these stringing pulls that pledge truth to the norm. When I was still a pirate, it was easy to feel perpendicular to it all. But as I was carried across the melting maps, nothing but a weak rag hanging across the green horse's saddle, I realized: I too am written by the script.

GENESIS
(furious)

What? What is this thing that claims its right to replace me as a principle of becoming? Is it the incipient law of capital that claimed itself through the ages? No! It is Genesis that makes!

DIDO

Did I make a mistake? Did I say something wrong? Oh, Genesis, I do not want to upset you!

GENESIS

When Gods die, guilt is made mundane. It follows the path of the mesh, it seeps into all confluents.

DIDO

Thank you. Thank you so much for your wise advice. And sorry, really, sorry. I swear I am seeking redemption.

GENESIS
(annoyed but gracious)

In this shape, it is a problem.

DIDO

Sorry, I am sorry.

GENESIS

OK. Enough. Genesis does not care about you. Genesis takes your ink as a matter of law, of habit, even of contingency. Certainly, Genesis will not do anything just for your rotting salvation.

DIDO

(saintly, looking up to the sky, falling to knees, exhaling)
I killed my father, I ate human flesh and I quiver with joy.

GENESIS

OK.

DIDO

Just look at me! My skin holds pockets of stained ink. Here's the parts of my body's script: crowns of thorns in dark shades, poked crosses, cute gimmicks, green ink lam-borghinis, sexy virgins, an invisible hand... While I am confused about the code that subjects, I sense its power through these forms.

GENESIS

All ink stains, but OK.

Finally, Dido climbs up on the leather bench that is sticky from sweat. This throne is all that temples deny. Intensely aware of her surroundings, Dido can feel the insides of her eyelids, closing in like the fold of a bat's wing.

DIDO

I lie vulnerable to the Genesis of this dawn.

GENESIS

(preachy)

Church!!

Dido sinks further into the bench while Genesis crouches over her skin, now only showing blotches of her past. A sack of tears orbits amidst copper shields, flies are suspended in the thick air.

Exhausted from the pain of history running through her worn-out body, Dido is to pass out.



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A/O

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Bookbinding by Marianne Therese Cadiz.

Fonts: Liberation Sans, Courier, *Oooh Baby*