

THE BOOK OF



MARIA

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 **Maria**.
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 **Maria**,
you can put the book back and pick another one. Have fun!

ABOUT MARIA

- **Maria** is a talented watchmaker and inventor from a bourgeois family in Brno.
- Married to František, a watchmaker with a small studio.
- Long remains in the shadow of her husband's family business.
- She builds watches but also other devices, dealing with time-perception.
- In her heart, **Maria** knows she is the best inventress of all times.

Maria lives around the year 1800, when following things happened:

- + The arrival of the Napoleonic Grand Armée to Moravia.
- + Her father and 3 of her 4 brothers were executed by the invading Napoleonic forces, her last brother survived the ravage of Austerlitz only to return home with a wound that would never heal. This brother caught a deadly fever at the hospital. He, her mother and all of Maria's family perished in this harsh typhoid epidemic.
- + In 1818 an obelisk was inaugurated in Brno in commemoration of the fallen troops.





1 : Double pleasure



for **Maria**

with **Hunter**

ps

Sunday, 23rd June 1805

Maria and her husband František are in the thermal baths of Luhačovice celebrating their newest invention - the Time Analytical Engine. It is a watch shaped device that enables the wearer to alter the perception of the flow of time. This means that the wearer might have a very distorted image of the world, while the perception of others remains normal. As usual, this was mainly Maria's idea. Indeed, all František did was purchase the materials. Nevertheless Maria is proud of her device - a glimpse into the future, where the perception of time will be altered on a mass-scale to bring the greatest revolution in history.

Right now, they are sitting in a steam bath when František decides to prolong his enjoyment with the new device. Without mentioning anything to Maria he leaves to get the T.A.E. and sets it to slow his perception down. As he re-enters the bath a sudden gush of steam hits him in the face. In his experience, this is so intense that he starts to fiddle with the device to stop it, loosening one of the wheels. This leads to a malfunction effectively setting the rate of the deceleration of his perception to infinity, freezing himself in time.

Maria immediately realizes what her husband did.

MARIA

(to herself)

What a selfish idiot he is... I always knew that he only cared for his own pleasure...

HUNTER

(excited)

PLEASURE?

MARIA

What is it to you? Just leave me alone.

Hunter looks at Maria's immobile husband.

HUNTER

Well it seems you can't really satisfy him.. Only the Sun gives without ever receiving.

(poking Maria's husband)

He seems really stuck, I'm an expert in these things – I'm sure I can help him!

MARIA

HIM! How about somebody help me for once? 'Cause in my life, I am the Sun.

HUNTER

Sure! What do you need help with?

MARIA

(surprised)

Huh... uhmmm..

HUNTER

(laughs)

See?

MARIA

(thoughtful)

Alright, I guess you got me, thanks..

HUNTER

(making pistols with his hands)

Double pleasure possibility!! BOOM! Let me shine on you!

MARIA

...you had too much absinthe?

HUNTER

Not really...

MARIA

Now I get it! You're actually doing all this for yourself!

HUNTER

How can I put it? ...taking is giving.. one hand washes another... you know?

MARIA

(sarcastically)

Shared pleasure is double pleasure?

HUNTER

EXACTLY! So, I'll take your hubby, give him my special treatment and he'll be good as new. And once I'm done with him I don't think he'll want to return to you.

Win, *(pointing at Maria)*

Win, *(pointing at Maria's husband)*

WIN! *(pointing at himself)*

Hunter throws the husband over his shoulder.

MARIA

Wait! Taking him means taking the watch I made, it's one of a kind.

HUNTER

Can't you make a new one? It's just a watch!

MARIA

You're an idiot, but maybe you're right..

HUNTER

Ouch..The severity of our will is what makes us tremble.

Bye then!

MARIA

What are you actually gonna do to him?

HUNTER

(as he exits)

The solar annulus is the intact anus of his body at eighteen years to which nothing sufficiently blinding can be compared except the Sun, even though the anus is Night.

Maria remains in the steam bath reflecting on what just happened. She downs the last sip of prosecco and leaves the thermal bath on her carriage pulled by six white horses when she notices a feeling of relief and curiosity about the things to come.





2 : Termites' Mound



for **Maria**

with **Dido**

pr. 9

With a towel turban around her hair, Maria descends from the horse carriage. The six white horses that had carried her weight walk off the stage. With her head high up, Maria presses her hips through the crowds she knows all too well. Any movement that doesn't involve the shoulders doesn't count as movement. The horizon of the panorama is a slick blue line, its bottom is framed by buckets of cauliflower carried by the merchants. Maria walks to a kiosque and sticks a sheet of paper, a dating ad for herself, on its milky vitrine.

MARIA

Uh.

Maria's body, already heated up by the sauna experience and everything it involved, quivers from exhaustion. But the word must stick! As Maria puts her ad up, Dido descends from a rotting ship drifting on the thin stream that is the Svratka. Its waters are yellow and brown and green, just as the irides of Dido. Skeleton-Sterlets jump out of the river like dolphins. Dido, the pirate, is looking to loot as she follows the smell of tobacco stacked in the small kiosque. As Dido moves closer, she takes notice of an innocent fingertip tacking paper on the glass.

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 pulls out a gun and points it at the clerk. Maria, now in complete sync with it all, joyfully snatches a pack of Nic-Nacs.

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 mannerisms. First dare: Let's see you pick me up!

Maria walks up to Dido and, with renewed zeal, bends down a bit and puts her long arms around Dido's thighs, trying to hoist her above 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 gun at the clerk, Dido starts to feel hot. Many merchants have gathered around the scene. Dido, eager to fuck, hastily points the gun 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.

DIDO

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

Maria plunges into the opening. Both descend. Lying on the floor, Maria crawls to lace her legs to Dido's, and starts licking the pirate's ribs, then the convex of her torso, then the neck. 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.



Tick Tock

Maria



Maria is sitting at the desk in her dimly-lit workshop, surrounded by a veritable arsenal of watchmaking tools and a handful of completed watches. The room was small, but cluttered with the remnants of her craft - gears, screws, and springs - and infused with a musty odor that spoke of countless hours spent in this very space. A large window looms over her, overlooking the town square, and the sound of carriages and horses clip-clopping on the cobblestones below reverberates throughout the workshop.

It is winter, and the frigid chill creeps into the small space, numbing her fingers and obscuring her breath. However, it is a welcome reprieve from the usual stench that wafts through the streets, now masked by a thin layer of ice. In the distance, she can see the silhouettes of factory workers shuffling home to their dormitories after another long night in the mechanized world that had taken root.

Maria is lost in thought, her fingers fidgeting with a broken piece of glass.

MARIA

(groaning)

Aaand another day starts... What am I to do today?

Maria puts the piece of glass on the table, looking at the things scattered on its surface.

MARIA

(desperately)

How will I earn my bread now?

Maria takes the thinker's pose, chin in her hand.

MARIA

(in a fake pensive tone)

Hmmmmmm...

She picks the first tool that she can grab with her hand.

MARIA

(talking louder, sarcastically)

Maybe I'll start with one of the ten watches this textile company ordered. They want to monitor their staff, to make their life hell.

Rage feels that treacherous rage coming.

MARIA

(exhaling loudly)

OR!!

(getting lost in thoughts, staring out the window)

Maria stands up and violently pushes her chair back causing a loud noise. The air in the room stands still.

MARIA

(loudly)

I can try to get the job for the bishop, to make the clock for the church. It will for sure be one of the biggest tickers made in town. But what for? We all know that I'm never gonna get it. Nobody ever commissions me for anything! *(louder)*

MAYBE! I just have to bat my eyes at another guy to finally get one! It's not like the next guy will give me any credit either!

Maria stops talking as if lost in thought. Looking at her hand, she realizes she's holding a screwdriver.

MARIA

(muttering to herself)

As if any of the other watchmakers in this stupid little town could make a more precise watch than these hands can.

Maria pushes everything off the table to the floor.

MARIA

(getting louder and louder)

Or MAYBEEEE...

Maria puts her right hand flat on the table and stretches it out.

MARIA

These hands are to be punished for what they haven't done!

In one movement, Maria slams the screwdriver through the back of her hand and quickly pulls it back. She's bleeding.

MARIA

(screaming in pain)

DO PRDELE!!!!!!!

Maria falls to her knees, blood drips on the floor.

MARIA

(crying)

I just can't take it anymore!

Maria sobs. Her gaze, lost in time and space. All the clocks in her workshop synchronize their ticking.

MARIA

(to herself)

Tick, tock. Time passes, but it doesn't heal all wounds. Not the ones you inflict on yourself. I remember the worst I did to myself.

Maria's thoughts are now consumed by the memory of her most magnificent creation, a watch unlike any other. It had the ability to alter the wearer's perception of time. That was a prototype, a mere beginning of Maria's grand plan: to create a device able to alter the time perception of a mass of people.

MARIA

(a tear running down her cheek)

I should have never given away that watch. It was my masterpiece. My most prized possession. But I was willing to trade it for... for what? For a life without him. For a life without being overshadowed.

The ticking of her own creations desynchronised creating a cacophony that reminded her of the countless hours she had poured into her craft. For her, time was not merely a commodity to be bought and sold, but a malleable force to be harnessed and kept slow. With that latest creation, she had taken a step towards decelerating the flows that tame time.

MARIA

(to herself)

How could I be so stupid? To sell out just to avoid confrontation?! Why didn't I set myself free? Time is not for sale! And it should never be!

She takes a deep breath.

MARIA

(determined)

That watch is my time, and I need it back.





3 : T.A.E.



for **Maria**

with **Genesis**

p. 16

A bustling market in the mid-1800s. It is winter, the sounds of vendors hawking their goods and people haggling fill the crispy air. The market is teeming with life, with merchants selling everything from fresh produce to handmade trinkets. People of all walks of life, from noble lords to beggars, jostle and push through the crowd.

MARIA

What a chaotic place this market is, with its endless noise and smells. How I long for peace and solitude.

The wind continues to gust and gently shakes the terracotta pots Maria is looking at. It reminds her of the tulip bulbs she dug away this year. She hopes they won't rot in the frozen soil again. Along the pots there are several hand-crafted bird whistles made of clay. She grabs one. The wind passing through its tiny body makes an eerie murmuring sound hardly distinguishable from noise. Wait... what was that? Maria starts to recognize words.

MARIA

(sharply)

Who is there?

No answer.

(mumbling) Am I losing my grip on reality again?

A sudden gust breathes life into the small creature again.

GENESIS

Oh, to forget possession is but a curse.

Maria freezes for a moment. Are the demons back? She decides to give into her supposed delusion.

MARIA

Who are you?

GENESIS

Genesis is the flow of things. Genesis is everything.

MARIA

Oh, god help me resist my death drive one last time. Is it my turn for salvation?

GENESIS

You shall find what you're looking for if you follow the currents of time. Many things have been seen but there is no physical form holding onto them, let alone the ability to grasp the burdens of desire.

Maria hears the sound of ice cracking from the fountain. It's partially frozen. She glimpses a spark of light under the surface when the water starts trembling.

GENESIS

Both constant and fleeing, time is but the embodiment of its very fragmentation. There is a place where all wounds are covered and every offspring of vicious ideals melted in a never-ending song of joy. What has found its way here shall now return your cherishment of life and death.

Maria recognizes her watch as the source of the blinding sparkle of light.

MARIA

Hey! Were you the one that took it from me? My own time, my future?

GENESIS

It was the time the dearest to this place was traded for what was dearest to you.

MARIA

My invention was lost together with someone I wanted to forget. One could say it was a sacrifice. How come you appear now, filthy creature and pretend to own it yourself? What was the price? An invention might leave the body, but the idea always stays with its creator.

GENESIS

Time brings mistakes. You think this object that is so dear
to you came back by accident?

MARIA

Wait! Who are you?

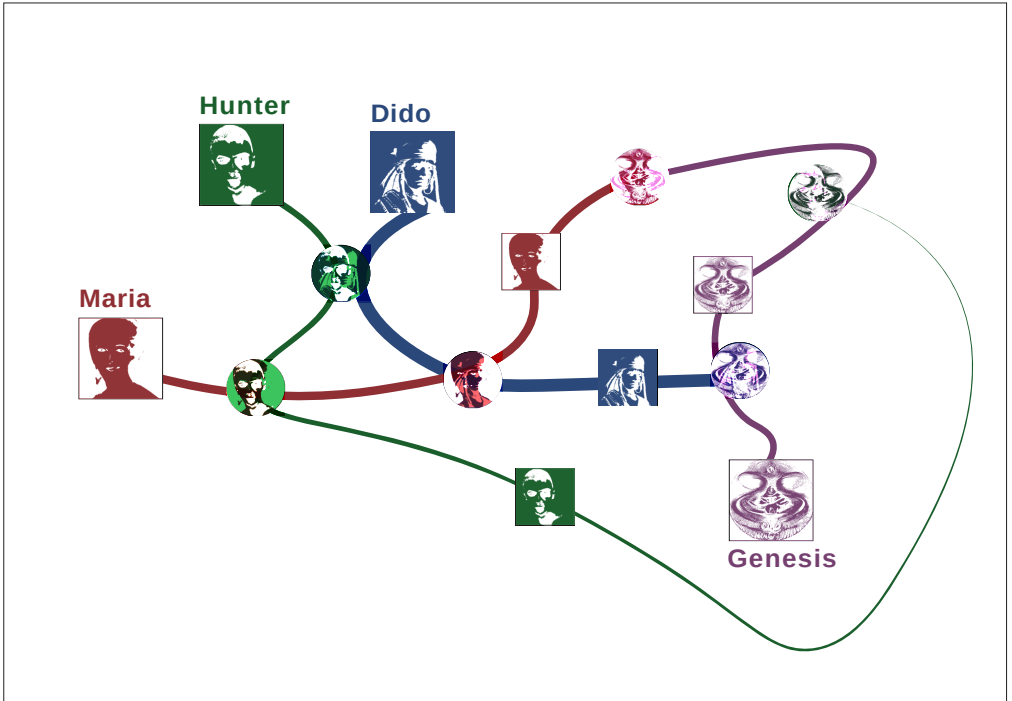
GENESIS

Mistake me not for the one who tooketh, I retrieved this
object for the price of my own soul from the one who offered
it to me as a good. So please accept it as a sign of closu-
re.

*Genesis disappears. Maria is left with just the sound of the
bustling marketplace around her. The unforgiving cold of winter air
has never felt more still. There is a Ticking in the distance.*



Encounter Map



This map shows when in the course of their lives, the four protagonists meet each other. The succession of these encounters is chronological in every single character's process but a-chronological within the dramaturgy that comprises all four of them.

Although they all breathe a different time and are at a different pace, their dialogues and monologues mark influential turning points inside their singular stories.

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A/O

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