

DUCK IT



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The First Duck



“Sometimes it all starts with a piece of plastic that refuses to sink.”

Helsinki, October 2005

I had just arrived from Cannes, in the south of France. Sun, noise, conversations, deals, energy. Straight on to Helsinki, Finland - no time to even go home to the Netherlands first, where I lived.

And then - Helsinki. Quiet, cold, clear. From the south of Europe to the high north. Where October in Cannes still felt like summer, winter seemed to have already arrived in Helsinki.

The transition hit my system like a slap. Where France had been buzzing with life, time here seemed to stand still. I was tired. Too many projects, too many people, too many thoughts. Even my head was making noise.

In my hotel room, a large silent space overlooking the harbor, I instinctively opened the bathroom door for a quick inspection.

And there she was. On the edge of the luxurious bathtub. Almost careless. A small yellow rubber duck. Plastic. Smiling.

Honestly: completely out of place in a hotel this fancy. I remember thinking: really, I don't have time for this.

But I also had to laugh. Probably for the first time in days, I realized later. There was something disarming about the thing. A little silly, a little cheerful - exactly what I was not, at that moment.

"A small yellow piece of absurdity that showed up exactly on time."

Originally the plan was to go down for a drink before bed. An attempt to quiet my head a little. But the duck gave me a much better idea.

I did something I usually never do: I took a bath. With the duck.

So there I lay. With all my thoughts - and one piece of plastic.

I looked at her and a thought came to mind: this duck can really only do one thing.

Float.

No deadlines, no expectations, nothing to prove. She did the one thing she was made for - and it was enough.

That got to me. Ridiculously so.

I could not stop looking at her. As if that yellow piece of plastic knew something I had long forgotten.

Looking back, I believe that was the exact moment it all began. Nothing spectacular, no beam of light from the sky - just a small smile, somewhere in Helsinki, in October.

But there was something profound in that moment. A memory, maybe. As if something in me said:

you don't have to hold on to all of it.

My life was basically one endless stream of performing. And there, in that bathtub, in that silence, I felt something for the first time in ages: space.

As if, for a moment, I didn't have to do anything, other than just be, look, breathe.

And float.

Looking back - twenty years later

I didn't know back then that this small encounter would turn out to be the seed of a journey that would eventually become a book, decades later. But when I look back now, it all just makes perfect sense.

The silence in Helsinki. The proverb I found years later, next to a dumpster. The moment my body stopped and my hearing fell silent. The current that got everything moving again.

It all belongs to the same river. And that little duck - she was the one standing at the source. I just didn't realize yet that one day I would turn her into a verb.

"Everything I needed to learn was already floating in that bathtub."



The Current

There is no plan.
Only a current.
It carries you,
even when you thrash.
There is not a thing you have to do.
Except just float, and be.
Breathe in.
Let go.
The world moves,
and you move with it.
Maybe that's enough -
for now

- Iemke Roos