

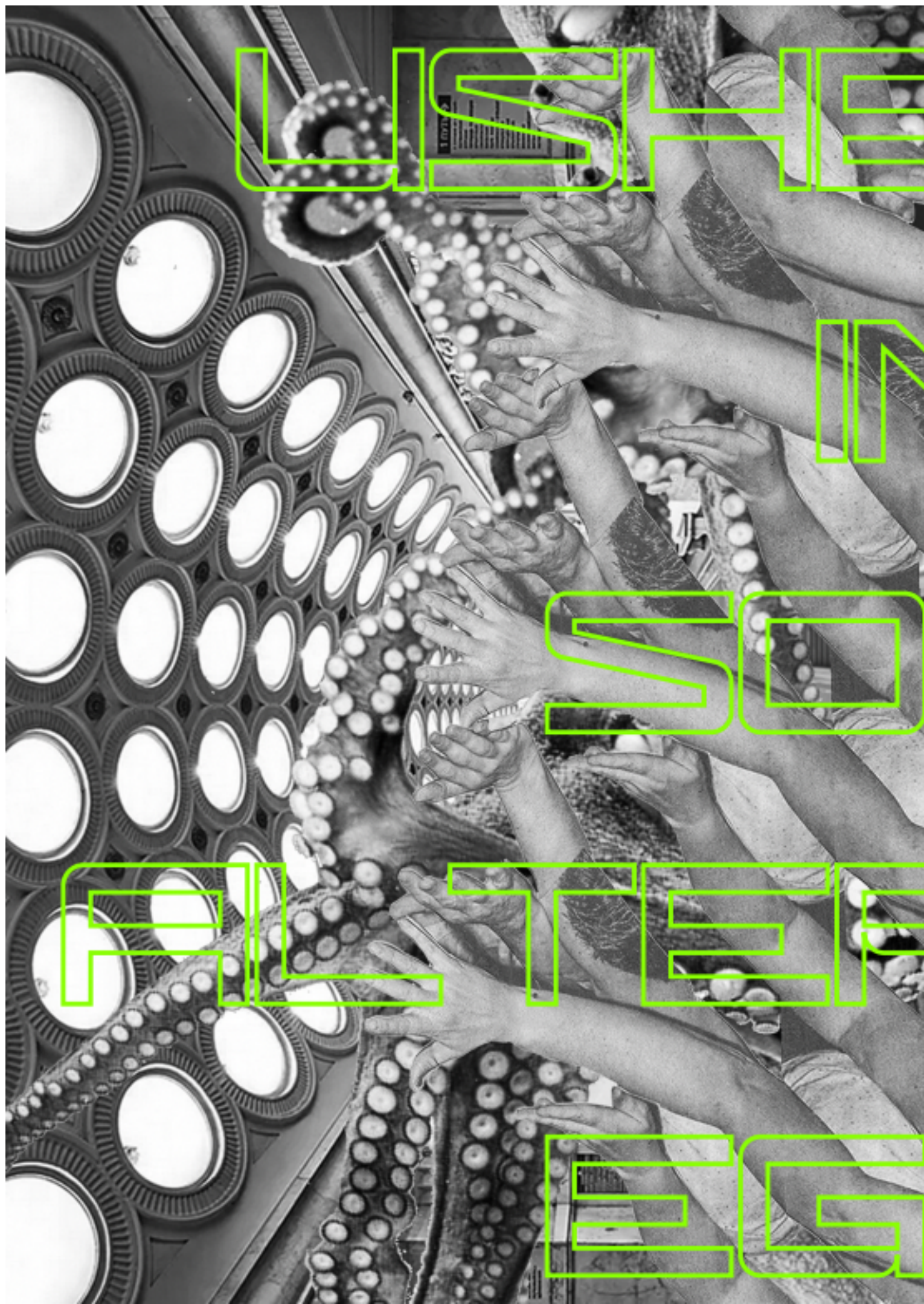
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USHERING IN SOME ALTERNATE EGOS  
a performative script by  
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PH: Character or Agent ONE is a visual artist and artist researcher who, due to their diverse background and the range of disciplines they touch on in their work, often feels like an imposter. They wear a gray work jumpsuit, marked with clay stains, typing on their silver-gray laptop with clay-dusted fingers—fully aware that clay dust is poisonous to computer parts and circuitries.

AG: Character or agent TWO seems to be an artist and artist researcher as well. We don't know much about them at the beginning, but they also seem to have a weakness for jumpsuits.

PH: Character or agent THREE are an uplifting mood filled with love. Their color is a blend of mustard yellow and a deeply satisfied, satisfying purple, elegantly mixed into various shades.

**AG: SCENE 1 — FADE IN**

*Dimmed ceramic studio space. Character ONE is sitting behind a laptop typing. Character THREE is in the air.*

Character ONE  
*(talking softly to themselves while typing)*

Dear Character TWO,  
How was your trip? How was your jury work? Any chance you could take a look at the list of potential topics for a joint conversation in the meantime? Let me know!

*Character ONE presses the delete key frantically.*

Character ONE *(continued)*  
Nope. Let's just wait a little bit longer. I really do not want to put any pressure.

*Character ONE looks at the screen, then gazes upward blissfully at Character THREE, who is gently humming within their glowing color spectrum. FADE OUT*

**PH: SCENE 2 - LIGHT COMES ON SUDDENLY.**

*A small round table with a spindly chair stands outdoors in a garden. The light is white-grey and we can hear rural sounds like cows mooing, leaves falling and rippling water.*

Character TWO  
*(sitting at the table opens a laptop, taps some keys and gasps)*  
Huh?!

*Character TWO looks up at the sky. It's starting to rain.*

Character TWO  
*(mutters)*  
How to find the time? *(Frowns, sighs.)* The time, the time, the time...

Character THREE  
*(is languishing on the back of a cow, who doesn't seem to notice, and emits some puffs and clinks, and a laughing sound, guttural.)*  
Grruh...huh huuuh haha.

*Character TWO looks at character THREE questioningly, helplessly.*

Character THREE  
What was it the Russian philosopher lady said at PAF? "I don't have time to work because I have to work...!" Griiihahaha... oh dear, you people are so stupid.



Character TWO

*(stares at character THREE and grumbles)*

Yeah, right, easy for you to say!

...

Hey, I don't think you're supposed to be able to talk, I mean that's just weird. You... you're.. more like an idea right? I mean, you don't have a mouth! And... I hate when everything becomes anthropothingy-ed.

*Character THREE is glowing, stretching, slowly engulfing the cow and shamelessly emitting strange, rude noises.*

Character TWO

*(turns her attention back to the laptop and reads out loud while she taps the keys)*

Dear Character ONE,

Is it too weird to say I love you?

The jury was... fine... interesting... I was busy with this for 3 days: one day to get there, one day for the jury including a party, and one day to leave again. And now I still have to write a jury report.

I will be paid 300 euros, the travel costs are covered.

I think objectively speaking this probably counts as being underpaid. But then: I met interesting new people; I was taken seriously, people were interested in what I had to say and nodded their heads reverently when I was speaking ("What I appreciate in the piece... what I think needs more development... so my first question is..." Nodding, huh-humming, more nodding). So there is an economy of things other than money I guess. All so 'art-worldy'! 'We can't really pay you, but look at all the perks!' And see how happily my little ego nestles into that soft blanket.

'Work won't love you back', says Sarah Jaffe.

Character one, will you love me back, or will you make me work? Or is it the same thing? (Not that it matters, I still love you.)

*Shot of the sky, the rain is gathering momentum, and begins to pour. Shot of the cow who has almost disappeared into the vapours of Character THREE. All that is left is a radiating, pulsating cloud.*

**Light SWITCHES OFF SUDDENLY**

### **AG: SCENE 3 – LIGHTS ON**

*Character THREE is languidly engulfing the languishing cow. In this conjunction with THREE, the cow exists in a state of effortless simultaneity: eating, sleeping, and thinking, involving their stomachs, bones, brains, hooves and horns, intestines and anus, in a rhythmic, cyclical, ruminative process that could, but does not have to, be called work.*

**LIGHTS OFF**

**AG: SCENE 4 –** *The scene opens with a layered soundscape –a blend of chewing, gurgling, and the faint crackle of blistering electricity in the darkness. Slowly, the visuals of a generic bio-supermarket emerge.*

**CUT TO:** *Character ONE stepping into the supermarket, still wearing their grey, clay-stained work jumpsuit. To them, it feels like a protective cloak, feeding into the mystique and allure of the creative "visual artist." In the background, a faint melody of Sub-Saharan space rock plays, with brainwave sound frequencies subtly woven in to ensure the perfect consumer-encouraging environment.*

Character ONE

*(rolling their eyes)*

Entrainment sound frequencies. Of course!

*Character ONE continues talking to themselves while walking through the aisles with a classical thinking bitch face.*

Character ONE *(continued)*

Do I want to make them love or work? I love working. I love loving. I love making my head explode.

*Character ONE pauses, mimics the sound and gesture of their head exploding, then smiles.*

CHARACTER ONE *(continued)*

Doesn't one need to love to feel truly grounded in the world? ... Love is work, isn't it?

*Character ONE approaches another shopper who is staring with exaggerated awe at an elaborate pyramid of stacked apples in the fruit section.*

Character ONE

I am secretly such a romanticist! Phew... *(They pause dramatically.)* Obviously, exclusively with reference to the early German Romantics and their avant-garde thinking and doing. But how could such avant-gardism transform so quickly into conservative nationalism?

*Character FOUR turns toward Character ONE, stepping effortlessly into the conversation that Character ONE had, until now, only with themselves.*

Character FOUR

Mmm. A closet romanticist. In a bio-supermarket. Wearing a jumpsuit. Your closet is rather see-through! *(glitterrrrguky seductive smile)* Wanting to ground yourself while staying on your toes at the same time?

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PH: Unexpectedly, two new characters need to be introduced:

Character FOUR is a beautiful, almost rudely attractive supermarket customer who has the potential to become an important catalyst in our endeavour.

Special Agent FIVE is a twitchy finger with a life and will of its own. It is adorned with a striking, slightly figurative bronze-colored ring, and it wouldn't be surprising if this ring held magical properties. Agent FIVE twitches seemingly at random, leaving traces in the script that appear undecipherable.

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*AG: Character ONE startles, nearly drops the still-empty basket, realizing they've been thinking out loud. Flushing red, ONE quickly recomposes, glances at Character FOUR, blushes even deeper, but still looks them daringly in the eyesssssl.*

**SCORE FOR CHARACTER ONE: Engulfing embarrassments. Swallowing inhibitions.**

Character ONE

...at the same time? Doesn't this metaphoring simply expose our endless struggle to evade categorisation to begin with?

Character FOUR

Draw a distinction!

Character ONE

Ah. One knows its references –even if they’re not entirely contemporary.

Character ONE (continued)

*(disrupting character FOUR in their preparation to answer)*

I have to go. I am a hangry person in a supermarket, on a mission. I’m expected for dinner—with someone quite special, actually. We’re going to discuss our glorious performative collaborations and how they might fit into our precarious artists’ lllllllivvves. Precarious indeed –but not unhappy. We consider our work so valuable, so gratifying that we forget to make sure we’re getting paid properly. Does this make us angry? Of course. But mostly, it drains us. *(tossing artisan potato chips into their basket.)* Too much information! Apologies. Hunger seems to transmute—or maybe transgress—me into an oversharer...

Character FOUR

*(grinning mischievously)*

Nice performance!

Character ONE

*(instead of blushing, flares into a radiant, glittery neon green)*

Well, thank you! *(cat walking away)*

**CUT to BLACK.** *As the sound of chewing, gurgling, and the crackling of blistering electricity begins to fade, it leaves behind a lingering trace—a hint of a beautifully pulsating Character THREE, utterly immersed in their own immense delight.*

#### **PH: SCENE 5 – LIGHTS SNAP ON**

*The supermarket has transformed in two different stylistic directions: it has at once become highly modernised with escalators leading up into an unknown void, and also simplified: instead of aisles and shelves, we see crates, stacked and placed in rows. Character TWO rushes in, head turning in all directions, panting, stumbling, swearing under her breath.*

Character TWO

*(muttering)*

Sh...t, f...ck, shiffekkuttytfuh shuh Ûh!

*(speaking to no one in particular)*

I’m late.

Sorry I’m late.

*(pointing behind her)*

There wazza... a... you know a thing, and then another thing, and that was a real THING kinda thing, you know? And then.. Ûh...

Hello? Hellllllllooo? I’m... I’m looking for Character... errr *(checks a note in her hand)* FOUR! Character FOUR?

*(Squints around, puts on some glasses)* Hello?

*Character TWO is searching. Lurking behind a pillar she discovers someone who seems to fit the description.*

Character TWO

*(Checking the note in her hand again)*

“...a beautiful, almost rudely attractive supermarket customer who has the potential to become an important catalyst ...”. You!

*Character TWO stands back and gazes at the divine looking apparition. As she watches a twitchy finger protrudes from Characters FOURS’s extravagant tentacled hair-do.*

Character TWO

Ah! I see, I see, yes I do see.... I see foxy four and twitchy five.... Yes, I do, I see you! *(Smiling madly)*

Character FOUR

*(Flicking their tentacles)*

Well that's all good and well, but I need to get on with my shopping. I'm here to shop, to catalyse. I'm not here to be gawped at.

Character TWO

I'm not gawping, I'm paying attention.

Character FOUR

You're paying me your attention?

*Character FOUR moves onto the lowest step of the escalator and begins to glide upwards. Character TWO is unwilling to quit spending time on FOUR, and cranes her neck to watch as the arresting being levitates, escalates, further and further up.*

Character TWO

Is a pyramid of apples the value of attention and an escalator a good measure of time spent? Ow!

*Character TWO jumps and convulses. She's been prodded roughly in the ribs by twitchy agent FIVE. She turns smartly and grabs hold it, takes it firmly between her thumb and 2 first fingers. Applying the ring-pen to the note that's still in her hand, she begins to write with it, murmuring as she does.*

Character TWO

Dear ONE, apologies for my silence, I want you to know that although my pen wasn't here, my thoughts were. Today I'm caught in the web of formalities around research. While on the one hand I should tell you I got some great news (my proposal has been accepted and I am now a researching-working ... um... person), I'm also confused and panicky everytime someone says the words 'artistic research'. My brain goes fuzzy and my ears start to zingggg. I would like to put some thoughts on these escalators and send them up with Character FOUR. Perhaps you'll bump into them on the way, or they might be vaporised by character THREE, or swallowed by the cow, or... ..so: How to not feel like an imposter all the time?

How do I know when I'm working (researching, creating, disseminating) and when I'm just pissing around?

How much pissing around is allowed when you're a (paid) researcher?

Why do I feel like I've lost my freedom now that I'm gonna be paid, and how fucked up is that?!

And why does Character ONE often feel like an imposter? They say that it's due to their varied background, but shouldn't that on the contrary give them more credibility? They've proven they are able to think and function in different disciplines, this is a big fat shiny badge of credibility I would think!

*A deep sigh comes from the darkest deepest depths of Character TWO. She straightens her back, lets go of the finger; it scrambles off. She places the written note on the escalator and watches it ascend.*

**SCORE FOR CHARACTER TWO: Languishing**

**LIGHTS OFF.**

**AG: SCENE 6** plays out as an endless scene, looping and looping in line with its spiritual signage and architectural setting. The audience, spectators,

participants can join the scene at any point in the script. The lights are either off or on, shifting between subtle colour changes, depending on the timing cues. The scene takes place on the continuous bio-supermarket escalator. It seems as if one slides in and out of dimensions with the escalator resembling a paternoster, to the extent that there are moments where characters appear upside-down. Character FOUR and Character ONE ride the escalator together. Character ONE, while feeling slightly intimidated by CHARACTER FOUR and its magnificent tentacles, nudges one of these tentacles to the side. In another dimension, Character THREE hangs around, fully dedicated to perfecting their unprofessionalism, and observant audience members might notice a curious synchronicity: Whenever a tentacle of Character FOUR is touched or moved, it triggers the coloured pulsations of Character THREE. Character TWO is expected to join the scene later.

Character ONE

Did you ever think about the word escalator? ES-CA-LA-TOR. Escalating what? And where? It's always up. Always ascending ...

Character FOUR

*(while admiring their own gorgeousness and casually probing dimensions with their tentacles)*

"Wikipedia says the escalator was invented in the United States..."

Character ONE

*(cutting in slightly prickled, as they pride themselves on being a true, rigorous researcher)*

Wikipedia ... really?

But isn't that just so fitting? Of course, it was invented in the U.S.! A word so perfectly reflecting the ideology of endless growth, constant upward progression. *(pauses, leaning into their idea)* It's different in other languages, you know. Rolltreppe. See? And elevators. Fahrstuhl. What about the downwards escalator? What about taking the elevator to ground zero? *(gradually becoming more animated, shifting into a fiery, almost revolutionary tone, as if addressing the masses)* Shouldn't we resist, confuse, and subvert these capitalist demands of "always higher, always expanding"? Let's reclaim the escalators and elevators of this world to always go downwards! Downwards into something richer, deeper, unexpected! Let's disorient the language itself! *(strikes a pose)* Let's ...

Character FOUR

*(while their tentacles applause and cheer, casually remarks)*

Capitalism has an even longer history in the Netherlands... or England, for that matter.

Character ONE

*(abruptly halts mid-rant and turns glowingly neon green again out of performative embarrassment this time)*

Hä?

A slightly awkward silence stretches between them. The camera pans away from the silence and follows one of CHARACTER FOUR's tentacles. At its tip, we find Character THREE fooling around (or "pissing around," as some might say), in a very serious manner. Having finally been paid properly, the newfound financial security frees them in ways they'd never imagined. The camera lingers on the heartwarming beauty of Character THREE's joyous promiscuity as they increasingly tangle themselves in Character FOUR's extended tentacles.

a tentacle of Character FOUR

Who are you? Ah... of course. Character THREE.

I'm getting more and more confused with all these characters involved... and I'm absolutely loving it!



Character THREE produces an array of unexpected yet deeply satisfying sounds and rhythmic light pulsations.

a tentacle of Character FOUR  
(in awe)

Wow. So professional!

Character THREE  
On the contrary! That's the whole point.

The camera zooms in again on one of the tentacles, tracing its twisting path to its end, where, unexpectedly, it transforms, or perhaps simply reveals itself, as Agent FIVE, the twitchy fingerrrrr. Agent FIVE, at the tip of Character FOUR's tentacle, offers its figurative ring to Character ONE. Enchanted by its brilliance, Character ONE eagerly accepts, only to find themselves irresistibly compelled to write with it in the air. The audience watches as luminous traces of their writing materialise, before dissolving into thin air.

Character ONE  
Why does Character ONE so often feel like an imposter?  
Something about feeling (cultural) disciplinary forces at work?  
Something about justification?  
About how expertise is still mostly tied to spear-like knowledge –sharp, singular, linear– rather than netted, interconnected, and sprawling?  
I get so annoyed by so-called professional conversations where references are hurled like darts at each other instead of embracing or even admiring patchy, intuitive, non-language-based knowledging from across various fields.  
Why do we need to know when we're working? What makes what we're doing work? Is the divide or the lack thereof between work and free or leisure time a mark of exploitation? Or rather, when does this separation or non-separation become exploitation? Still too many binaries...

Character ONE breaks the spell by drawing a big heart around the text still glowing in the air.

Character ONE (continued)  
I actually just wanted to do some grocery shopping!

**SCORE FOR CHARACTER ONE: Best Bitch prompts**

Character ONE  
Did you ever wonder about the word escalator? ...

The loop begins again. As the scene repeats itself, each time with slight variations, certain words get increasingly deformed, ending up as Cowstewmer, ploflepsionell, sleeploration, exboistration, fleasure trime, imboxster, clanwage, and loopscalator, or exscalator.

**PH: SCENE 7** – Character TWO enters the scene on all fours, crawling, dragging her body along the floor, slithering onto the loopscalator, and lying back languidly as the exscalator takes over the responsibility of mobility of her body. She is yawning and stretching, her face is blotchy, her hair stands out in all directions.

She's clutching a purple flask in one hand from which she occasionally takes small sips. The bottle emits puffs and clouds that settle around her head, trailing around her in wafts and tufts. Her eyes search for Character THREE. After a while she speaks.

Character TWO

I'm getting really dizzy.

...

Not feeling so well

...

Can we pleeeeeeeeeaaaaase... stop! the loop? Pleeeeeeeeeaaaaase?

*(gagging, whispering)*

Please stop?

*Abruptly, everything stops. The loopscalator grinds to a halt, everyone freezes. Character TWO looks about her, eyebrows raised, taking in this highly unexpected turn of events.*

*She takes another swig from the flask. Even the puffs and clouds have somehow solidified. She doesn't immediately notice that there is still one character that's fully functional, going about their messing about as stolidly and unphased as ever, and that's Character THREE.*

*TWO reaches for one of the solidified clouds near her face and slings it in THREE's direction. The cardboard-like cloud hurtles through the air, but as soon as it gets near to THREE it becomes gas again, a slow, puffy cloud that settles itself around THREE. TWO, enjoying the game, repeats her action until there are no more puffs within her reach. Clearly TWO is seeking attention from THREE. Clearly THREE has something that TWO covets. Is it their insouciance? Their capacity for pissing about so seriously? Their ability to frivolously refuse? Or is it just their salary? Their celery? Their salivary?*

**SCORE FOR CHARACTER TWO: Languish more. Say NO! & Engulf!**

**AG: CUT TO** *character ONE finally emerging from an undefined cave –no one knows exactly what kind of cave– but let's hope it was full of glittery soothings. Feeling slightly misplaced, Character ONE tries to cover it up with their well-refined social awkwardness, asking into the void.*

Character ONE

Komen jullie hier vaker?

**SCORE FOR CHARACTER ONE: Practising being flirtatious in space**

Character ONE

Komen jullie hier vaker?

*Character TWO and Character THREE exchange a perplexed look before bursting into sparkling laughter, so infectious that Character ONE can't help but join in.*

Character ONE

*(blushing, visibly relieved)*

*I have missed you. Languishingly. Schmachten ... Ach! (Making a theatrical gesture full of drama, as if fainting on the spot.)*

**PH:** *CHARACTER TWO slides over the stage in a horizontal position. On her belly, like a swimmer, then on her back, like a caterpillar, then just rolling, rolling. Her eyes are moving in all directions, searching, searching.*

**A:** *Character ONE glances at Character TWO softly. Slowly, Character ONE begins to rise in a shimmering golden air bubble. Floating upward and slightly out of the frame, they seem to embrace the swirling currents of past doubts and baggage, devouring them into a much juicier present future.*

**CUT TO BLACK – THE END**





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