

Playing cupid

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*Happy Valentine's Day,
and Viva la Slovenija!*

Miloš¹ may have been just an ordinary guy, like most of his peers, having a hobby, hanging out with friends in bars all day and night, only barely leaving any time for actual studying. Whatever the case may be, let us not pretend that he was “unlike the other boys” because he had some hobbies, had two friends and may also be a procrastinator, something he has in common with many students out there. Though, there was one small deviation, besides being a fancy dresser...

“Ah, Nuša².”

“Hello, Miloš!”

“Ready for another boring day at university?”

“Sure am. Let’s go for it!”

Miloš is not single. His girl, Nuša, was a perfect gal: long blonde hair, golden glasses, crystal blue eyes, tall, caring and energetic. She was the girl of his dreams. Maybe even literally...

In fact, Miloš *is* single to everyone else. Nuša does not actually exist outside his head. Regardless, the two are able to hold a rational conversation even if everyone else thought he was, in every meaning of the word, talking to nobody. He never paid any attention to their distant stares.

His day is usually uneventful: he gets up, has breakfast, bikes to university, finishes lectures, goes home, eats, bikes to a sports hall, goes back home, eats, then plunges onto his bed. The routine has not changed besides the addition of Nuša to his life.

At university, during class, Miloš was merely following lectures for one and a half hours. After the first period, he went to the university cafeteria for some grub. Nuša joined him as well, but she could not interact with the real world.

“You sure you don’t want to eat?” He asked.

“Don’t worry about me! Have a good meal.”

“Thanks.”

He munched on some kind of chicken meal alongside peas, rice and

1 Miloš: /'mɪlɔʃ/, pronounced ME-losh.

2 Nuša: /'nʊʃɑ/, pronounced NU-sha.

diced carrots. Despite being cheap, it was delicious and enough for him to continue following the rest of the lectures later in the day.

“Is everything okay?” She asked, her finger poking through his face.

“It’s just another lonely day,” he replied. “I don’t think I’ve made a female friend yet.”

“Aw, well, you have me by your side!”

“I really do appreciate your company,” he said, nodding and smiling.

He enjoyed her company more than anyone else. Rather, he was the only one who enjoyed her company. She cheered him on when he has badminton practice at the sports hall, when he has an exam, when he is just having a bad day; it did not matter, for she was always there for him.

However, all things change, as people say, and it began when another person was introduced to Miloš. It was the start of February. A woman with long black hair, purple eyes covered by her black glasses, a smile with a force of a thousand suns—they were colleagues, but not quite friends. The woman met him while he was sitting at a bench outside the building. Miloš was, as always, chatting it up with Nuša. When the woman looked towards him, Nuša disappeared almost immediately.

“Hello!” The woman yelled, approaching him. “Do you mind if I sit here?”

She had already walked to him.

“Not at all,” he said, tapping an empty seat next to him.

“Thanks. You must be Miloš. Some guys told me about you.”

“Oh, yeah, about that...”

Earlier in January, during an outing, Miloš and his two friends were having a beer when one of the two started talking about girls and randomly brought up whether Miloš had a girlfriend or not. He said he had taken her with him and “introduced” them to her. This made the two laugh with one friend suggesting:

“I must be blind, because I really don’t see anybody else at the table!”

“She’s right here!” Miloš said, pointing to where Nuša was.

Nevertheless, they continued laughing, but stopped when they saw Miloš not laughing along. Behind closed toilet doors, the two friends agreed to set him up with another woman, the same one now sitting next to Miloš, in hopes of befriending him and even go beyond. Only time would tell.

“I’m Gaja³,” she introduced herself with a small bow.

“Nice to meet you.”

3 Gaja: /'gɑ:ja/, pronounced GAA-ya.

As Miloš sat comfortably on the bench, Gaja's right hand made its way to Miloš's left hand which she caressed for a bit.

"So you have a girlfriend?" She asked.

"I'd like to think so," he said. "If only you could see her..."

"Aw, we can at least imagine, right? What is she like?"

"Blonde hair, blue eyes..."

Gaja kept nodding her head.

"She wears mostly pink, glasses with a golden rim, a little curvaceous... Wait, why am I telling you all this?"

"So we can imagine her, of course. What is she like on the inside?"

He tilted his head continuously to the side with each trait he listed:

"Well, she's nice, full of energy, always there to cheer me on..."

He then frowned.

"Yeah, that's about all I can think of."

"Okay," she replied before turning away. "*Hm, so I only really fit two, maybe three criteria if glasses don't matter. I'll ask anyway...*"

Gaja looked back at Miloš.

"Say, you wanna go out after class is over? You look like a chill person. We could go to a little café. I know one you might like."

"Sure! Oh, right, classes, I forgot."

"Right, let's meet at this exact spot."

The two shook hands, but went together into the building and even their classroom. Though, they sat apart from one another.

"*So who was she just now?*" Nuša asked, a little more demanding than usual, seated next to him.

He whispered, "just a friend I've met."

"*Is it? You sure you aren't neglecting your girlfriend?*"

"No, not at all! She's just a friend, okay?"

"*Alright, I'll believe you, then. Will you go out with me at the usual place, the sports hall?*"

"Now that you mentioned it... I'll see if she'll come with me."

After class was over, he and Gaja met at the same spot they met the first time. He asked if she wanted to go to the sports hall instead, or at least after a cup of coffee.

"Ah, no problem. We'll go wherever you want. I was just suggesting."

They agreed to meet at the sports hall once they change their clothes. It was twenty minutes later when they finally met up in front of the building. Having locked their bikes, they walked inside. They both

brought spare clothes, two towels and some shampoo with them.

“Do you go here every day?” Gaja asked.

“Almost,” he said. “Saturdays and Sundays are reserved for biking only.”

“Wow, quite a healthy lifestyle. Even I don’t consider myself that sporty.”

“It’s not much,” he said, picking up a rather tall racket. “I do some stretching and look for people to play badminton with.”

“There aren’t many people here right now... Since I’m here, let me be your opponent.”

“Okay! I was just about to ask.”

Miloš took another racket and passed it to Gaja. He then grabbed a badminton ball, cone-shaped and with a dozen feathers attached to it. Gaja moved behind the net and Miloš served the ball. The first few turns have been short but that was only because Gaja was getting used to swinging the racket. Soon, the two played for much longer.

“You’re pretty good at this,” Gaja said as she hit the ball. “I can see why some people would play with you.”

“Thanks,” he replied, slightly grunting as he returned the ball. “You’re not too bad, either! I mean, the game isn’t difficult, but it requires lots of movement.”

While Gaja was paying attention to the ball, she noticed a faint figure standing in the background, right behind Miloš. Giving occasional glances at it, she could recognise it: it fit the physical description of Miloš’s make-believe girlfriend, Nuša. She did not stare for too long; mainly because it vanished when she blinked. However, there was one thing off about the figure—it did not look supportive; it was lacking a smile. The ball fell next to her but she did not hit it.

“Is everything okay?” Miloš asked.

“Ah, no... I mean, yes! Uh... Thanks for asking, sorry.”

“Do you want to take a short break?” He put the racket down.

“Yeah, let’s do it...”

Miloš and Gaja sat down on a bench right next to each other and consumed some water. When Gaja blinked twice more, she saw the same figure between the blinks. She told Miloš she had to go to the bathroom and ran towards it. Just then, Nuša reappeared.

“*Just a friend, you say?*”

“She *is* just a friend!” He raised his voice slightly. “Can’t I have a female friend, too?”

“It doesn’t quite make sense, you see? You have a girlfriend. AND you have a female friend. It’s the same!”

“Actually, it is not. Girlfriend and girl friend, two words, are two different levels of affection. Do I really have to break it down for you?”

“Oh, so you’re defending her now?”

“No, I just want to hang out with someone who’s real!”

Immediately after saying that, he covered his mouth, but it was too late. The words have been uttered. Nuša gritted her teeth and crossed her arms.

“I thought this was a two-sided love! So much for using your imagination...”

“Look, I’ll find us some time to hang out, okay?”

“Oh, you better! After the fake friend is gone, we’re going on a date!”

“Heh, fake friend... You have no right to say that.”

“Why, you little—”

As she sensed Gaja’s return, she vanished again. Miloš turned his head towards Gaja who got closer to him.

“Do you still want to play?” He asked.

“Sure.”

They grabbed their rackets and played a match for half an hour straight. Gaja was fully in shape and was able to return most of his balls, but Miloš still won in the end. After the tiresome match, the two hit the showers and changed into their spare clothes, thanked each other for the company and walked out of the sports hall. At that moment, Nuša came back and they had a pseudo-date at a small bar where he had a small tortilla for the price of a coupon⁴. Then he biked back home without saying a word.

That night, he almost locked himself out of his own room. He wanted a small snack, so he left his room, with it his keys. His left pocket jingled with spare change. Once he got a chocolate bar, he climbed the stairs back to his room, but when he tried to enter, the door did not budge.

“Wait... I don’t have a roommate!” He knocked louder. “Hello?!”

Sadly, his dormitory did not supply backup keys, so he sat by the door to wait.

“Maybe someone’s using the restroom... No, why would they lock the whole room? The lock in the bathroom is enough!”

⁴ Brief explanation: in Slovenia, students have many benefits. One of them includes subsidised meals, i.e. they are given student coupons which they can use to either get a free meal or a discount for one.

He tried after five minutes, but the doors were still locked. He forced himself upon them with great force, but still nothing. The ruckus was heard by another resident.

“Yo, what’s with the noise?” He asked.

“Sorry... I’m just trying to get inside my own room, but for some reason it’s locked itself.”

The man raised an eyebrow.

“How do you even do something like that?”

“I don’t know!”

The man backed away and bashed the door, but it refused to break.

“You do have a window, right? Let’s try that.”

He left Miloš alone and out of the dormitory. He ran around the building until he reached the other side of it where Miloš’s room was. He managed to climb to his window and peek inside. He saw nobody in it, but he noticed that a key was wrangling in mid-air. Because there was a net in the way, the man took out a Swiss Army knife and sliced through it enough to be able to lift it up. The window was, thankfully, open, so he jumped into the room. Upon closer look, the key was, in fact, floating in the air. He acquired it after a bit of chasing by just snagging the key from the invisible man. When he opened his hand, the key was affected by gravity again. He picked the key up from the floor and unlocked the door.

“Your room might be haunted,” the man said, “I literally saw this key floating in the air.”

“Really,” he said. “Anyway, thanks for the help. But... how did you...”

“Sorry, the net had to go. Just tell the receptionist that it aged or something.”

“Alright... Thanks again, though. I owe you!”

They waved to one another and Miloš got inside. Without anything to do, he ate the chocolate bar, brushed his teeth afterwards and threw himself onto the bed.

The next day, Miloš met up with Gaja again, this time in a café after school.

“You were locked out of your own room?” Gaja said. “Don’t you have a roommate or something?”

“I’m still waiting for one to move in,” he replied. “Also, a guy fetched it for me but said the key was floating...”

“Ooh, creepy!” She swung her hands like two fans. “If only we had exorcists in real life.”

“True, but for now, let’s hope it doesn’t happen again!”

The two let out a laugh. While sipping on their drinks, the figure appeared again, behind Miloš, with an even sourer expression than before, but immediately vanished.

“Say,” Gaja continued, “how’s your girlfriend doing?”

“Ah, we’re going places sometimes. But, I don’t know... I’m starting to feel that I really do look weird pretending I have a soulmate.”

“I don’t think you look weird at all,” she said, “but I do understand why others would think that way. Do you really want your girlfriend to be exactly the same?”

“Well... I don’t really care about curves so much. They’re a fine addition, but all I need is a nice-looking girl and that has a bit of Nuša’s personality.”

“A caring girl, I reckon?”

“Yes... just someone I can care about and that can return the favour, you know?”

“Of course, that’s called common sense. All people should have it,” Gaja nodded. “But it’s OK to seek additional features of girls, like curves that you mentioned. I mean, you could say I have those.”

“Ah, I noticed. Hope you don’t mind the compliment,” he said, blushing.

Nuša reappeared again, only to disappear immediately after, with the same sour expression.

“Though,” he continued, “even if I ended up with a completely different girl from her, I would love her no matter what, as long as she loved me back.”

“Aww, I like your outlook on love,” Gaja replied. “I really do hope you find someone.”

“Thank you. You too.”

They finished their drinks and paid up. They then went their own way. Miloš was walking slowly when he was forcefully pushed onto the pavement. He quickly stood up and turned around and saw nobody besides Nuša.

“Nooo!” She exclaimed. “*You cannot just put me in low priority!*”

“Well, sorry that I’m hanging out with people other than you!”

“*No, I cannot forgive! I told you that I’m the only girl you can hang out with!*”

“Maybe it’s about time for me to mature a little!”

“*I won’t let you! I’m on your mind! I’m IN your mind! You cannot*

get rid of me so easily! Unless you die, but good luck with that also!”

Miloš was sweating profusely.

“What the fuck... I didn’t imagine her AT ALL to be so insufferable! What should I do??”

He stood up and tried to get away as fast as possible from her, but she reappeared in front of him and made him trip onto the pavement by having her foot in front. He lay there, almost in tears.

“No... This can’t be... She’s... interacting with the environment?? How did she get this powerful?!”

She approached him and flipped him over.

“Listen up... you better show some respect for Valentine’s Day! It’s a lovers’ holiday, you hear?”

“Y-yes,” Miloš trembled.

After nodding at him, Nuša disappeared until further notice. Miloš picked himself up and ran back home. While running, he heard his phone ringing. The phone displayed Gaja as the caller. He put it on his ear.

“Hello?” He said, running out of breath.

“Ah, Miloš! Are you okay?”

“I’m fine, don’t worry...”

“No, something must be up. I saw you trip over something.”

“You did?! Ah... it was just a stupid branch.”

“Really... I thought I saw a person there.”

“Eh? It must be just you, I don’t think I’ve seen anyone...”

“I don’t know, man... Well, as long as you’re fine, I don’t have to worry too much. See you tomorrow, then?”

“Yeah, bye-bye...”

After she hung up, Miloš continued to run for a little while longer. Once home, he took a nap.

Over the following few days, Gaja and Miloš held exhaustive conversations over the phone, getting to know each other. They played more badminton in the sports hall, rode their bikes to the outskirts of Maribor, even paid a visit to Maribor Island where they had a walk together. Miloš learned that Gaja likes to fiddle with technology (mostly cell phones) while she learned that Miloš enjoys travelling all around on his bike. The two have got comfortable enough for friendly hugs and just a tiny bit of hand-holding.

It was a week before Valentine’s Day. While Miloš was waiting for Gaja, a familiar face appeared—one he had not seen in a while.

“Oh, Nuša,” he greeted. “Sorry I haven’t had much time to see you.”

She frowned.

"I see... So you were neglecting me after all. Ahh, love can hurt sometimes..."

"I told you," he said, "I need to graduate from my fantasies at some point."

"And I've told you, you cannot get rid of me that easily! You've created me in your mind, and now you're just gonna abandon me?"

Previously looking at the ground, Miloš looked upwards and smirked.

"Well, if you put it that way... I guess I kind of am. You're just in my head, after all. I can stop thinking about you if I put enough willpower."

"Ugh," she shouted, "stop speaking like you know what to do! You can't do shit! Did you forget you tripped over me?"

"That was just a small trip. You can't do much more than that."

"Oh yeah? I'll show you!"

She stormed towards him, grabbed him by his neck and lifted him up. She smiled in a way not deemed friendly.

"Hoho, look, a creator can't even fight his own creation! What a wuss, am I right?"

Some students who happened to have looked towards Miloš saw him and thought he was floating in the air.

"O-okay," Miloš barely replied, with droplets of sweat falling down his face. "P-please, let me down..."

"Only if you leave that girl of yours alone and commit to me 24/7!"

"C-can you... make that time shorter...?"

"Twenty-four seven. Take it or go fuck yourself!"

As he was suspended in mid-air, Gaja also arrived at the scene. She disappeared and Miloš fell to the ground on his two feet, heavily breathing. If he is the only one to see Nuša, how is someone like Gaja going to know what was up? Will he have to forever deal with this creation in his non-existent love life? Is suicide the only option out of this hell?

Suddenly, he felt a soft kiss on his cheek and arms around his body. Gaja had approached him fully. Equally suddenly, Nuša reappeared.

"Hey, you, hands off—"

Gaja let go of Miloš. Before Nuša finished her sentence, Gaja moved one step to the left of where Nuša was supposed to stand.

She then firmly grabbed Nuša, threw her over the shoulder and saved

enough time to send her flying with a punch straight to her face, all whilst retaining a serious expression on hers.

“Huh???” Miloš opened his mouth wide. “You can see her? Does this change everything?!”

“It does,” Gaja replied, “now stay back.”

Nuša landed on her feet and immediately took out a machine gun from her pocket and started firing shots of tomato sauce. Gaja ran around her, trying to get close to her. A shot landed on Miloš’s face, who picked some of it up with his index finger and licked it.

“Wait,” Gaja yelled, “why is she shooting ketchup?!”

“It’s not ketchup,” he yelled back, “it’s called the ‘Tomato Sauce Special’!”

“You mean ‘Special Tomato Sauce’?”

“I meant the name of one of the attacks!”

“She has WHAT NOW???”

Right after finishing the sentence and after avoiding many shots, Gaja got close enough to punch Nuša one more time, sending her towards a tree in the background. Nuša tossed away the now-empty machine gun and loaded up a new one, this one firing soccer balls. Some shots that fired at Gaja hit her and caused her to jolt backwards. Miloš stood frozen when a ball was about to hit him, but Gaja picked him up and jumped onto one ball and onto the next.

“Let me guess, she’s gonna fire tennis rackets next!” Gaja shouted while jumping from ball to ball.

After holding him for a bit she grabbed his hand firmly, spun him around and, with all her might, threw him into the sky as he screamed “whee” for the time he was airborne. Before catching him, Gaja lowered herself and kicked two balls with both her feet, one after the other, towards Nuša. Both hit her and made her drop her other machine gun, then she fell to the ground. A large group of students had gathered around them to see this unusual event taking place right there on the campus.

Gaja landed perfectly on the ground and lifted her arms in the air before lowering them in time to catch the falling Miloš.

“Got you,” she said, smiling.

“That was awesome!” He said, giving her a thumbs-up. She gave one back to him.

She put him back on the ground and looked towards Nuša who had got up and was holding two machine guns and had three others floating in the air.

“We’re fucked, aren’t we?” Gaja asked.

All hell broke loose as machine guns started firing rugby balls.

“Okay okay, you got a great imagination,” she said, “now how do we stop this?!”

Miloš and Gaja began running in circles and dodging more balls.

“She may be able to interact with the outside world,” Miloš said, “but she is still part of my imagination.”

“Eh? Please don’t tell me I need to hurt you!”

He nodded.

“It sounds weird, but please punch me. We don’t have much time!”

Rugby balls were being shot all over the place, at such a rapid pace that dodging them became a game of its own.

“O-okay,” she said, preparing her fist. “I’m sorry in advance if it hurts!”

“It’s gonna hurt, but I’m all for it. A nice punch to my face should at least eliminate one, at most all five cannons.”

“I guess... Here it goes...”

Gaja’s fist quickly met Miloš’s face. He fell to the pavement, but the trick worked; three cannons stopped working. Pumping the fist in the air, Gaja ran towards Nuša with less difficulty, about to crack her knuckles for another hit. Just then, another cannon ran out of ammunition. Nuša could only helplessly look around and try to at least knock Gaja out once. Miloš slowly stood up to observe the remainder of the battle which did not last for too long.

Her knuckles cracked, and with the power of a thousand suns, Gaja went for an attack. Her hands felt like they multiplied, each sending an equally painful punch at Nuša, who had dropped her last cannon to the ground, almost having put her hands in the air.

Finally, Gaja aimed at the air where Nuša was punched towards and timed the final punch just right—she hit her face one more time and she flew above several trees, bounced up and down a few times before hitting the ground and exploding into many tiny orbs which disintegrated the moment they themselves hit the ground. All her artillery also disappeared forever.

Nuša was no more. But neither was Miloš’s consciousness; he fell to the ground once more, on his own. Gaja ran towards him and gently shook him.

“Miloš? Miloš!” She cried. “Hang in there, buddy!!”

One of her colleagues came forth.

“Hey... would you like me to give you two a ride somewhere safe?”
He asked.

“Ah, Domen⁵, I appreciate your help! I don’t think I can bike like this...”

The gentleman escorted them to his car and drove away while every other student wondered what in God’s name they just saw.

Miloš did not come to his senses until the following morning. He opened his eyes to the smell of hibiscus and the sight of a tidy room. Then, a woman walked into that very room.

“Miloš!” She exclaimed, seeing his eyes open.

He shuffled around in her bed while Gaja lay next to him for a wrap around him.

“Ahh, you got me worried there,” she said.

“Sorry, sorry,” he whispered. “I just fell asleep.”

“You did? But you fell at the same time Nuša was knocked out.”

“Nuša? What’s that? Something you put in your soup before you eat it?”

The two laughed a little.

“Well,” Gaja said, “don’t worry about her. Are you okay?”

“I’m fine... Maybe a little tired.”

“Ehh, didn’t you sleep already?”

They laughed again. She helped Miloš get up and he sat on the bed next to her. They looked at each other for a little bit, in silence.

“Hey,” Gaja said, breaking it up. “Do you have any plans this Valentine’s Day?”

She pulled out an envelope behind her back.

“No, I think I’ll just...”

“Why don’t you join us?”

She held the envelope in front of Miloš.

“That pink envelope... Could it be?”

“Oh, it is. The annual Valentin Fest.”

“But aren’t I required to come with a partner?”

“Yes, but you’ll have one,” she said, pointing to herself, “and that partner is going to be me.”

Miloš clutched both his hands.

“R-really? You’ll be my partner?”

She nodded.

“The invitation should have all info,” she said. “I look forward to

5 Domen: /'dɔ:mən/, pronounced DOH-muhn.

seeing you there! And please, I insist you take a bus. Can't drink and ride⁶, after all."

"Alright," Miloš said, smiling. "I will definitely consider it."

Several intense phone conversations within a span of a few days later, Valentine's Day came. Miloš was dressed extravagantly for the occasion: a black ribbon, a white shirt, trousers with two straps going over his body and around his shoulders and a pair of shiny, black rounded shoes. He thought how some of his colleagues would be able to recognise him in the very same outfit, but that he could not help it being his favourite attire.

He left the dormitory a little earlier and took a city bus to the main station, a trip which lasted some fifteen minutes. At the station, he ordered a one-way ticket for Ruše, a village a little further from Maribor. Once he paid a little more than two Euros, he was handed a ticket which he immediately gave to the driver on Platform 10. At exactly 18:15⁷, the bus departed and would occasionally stop to pick up and drop off some passengers. He arrived at a small bus stop in Ruše half an hour later. He strolled down the pavement for a few moments.

Once he passed by the roundabout, Hotel Veter⁸ was on his left side. Holding the envelope that Gaja had given him, Miloš entered the hotel and showed the invitation to the man at the reception desk. He led him into a spacious room filled with people and typical Slovenian music about love and women. Right at the entrance, Gaja greeted Miloš with a hug.

"So glad you're here! Looking good!"

Gaja herself was wearing a dark green dress and green low pumps.

"Oh, thanks. I like what you're wearing, too," he said, "although some heels wouldn't look bad on you."

"I told you, I don't like wearing them," she replied, poking his cheeks.

"I know, I know."

The two sat down somewhere further away from the speakers blasting loud music. Appetizer had already been served—some smoked meat and cheese, spread across a white plate. Later, everyone had pumpkin soup and even later could pick between various types of meat, plus salad meals for the vegetarians and vegans in the crowd.

At eight o'clock, Gaja asked Miloš to go outside for a moment.

6 Like "drink and drive", but applied to biking. Sometimes you may get unlucky and get pulled over and fined for drinking and riding a bicycle.

7 Or 6:15 PM for those using the 12-hour format.

8 "Veter" means "wind".

Leaving their drinks and empty plates behind, they left the noise-ridden conference room and into the great outdoors. Gaja lit up a cigarette while Miloš had his hands behind him.

“Do you remember anything from yesterday?” Gaja asked after exhaling cigarette fumes.

“Well... I think I was playing dodgeball,” he said. “Maybe I was in the air, too. And you... you were fighting against nature!”

“It wasn’t exactly nature... But it’s best if you don’t know.”

She pulled in one smoke and let it out.

“But anyway,” she continued, “was I annoying with so many messages?”

“No, it’s fine! I’m actually... pretty happy I got to talk to you over the phone. And I feel like...”

“...Like you and I have some stuff in common?” She added.

“Mhm,” he nodded.

“I feel the same way. Let’s go out.”

“Huh?” He exclaimed, tilting his head.

Gaja put her hands on Miloš’s shoulders.

“I mean it. I know you enough to think I would love to date you. Hold your hand, give you a kiss, you know how it is.”

Miloš’s face flushed a bright red colour.

“Wow, um... Well... uh...”

“Take your time,” she teased.

The two spent some time being silent while a faint sound of indoor speakers was heard.

“Are you... really fine with a weirdo like me?” He asked after some time.

“Of course... weirdo. I wouldn’t have asked otherwise.”

“Fair... does this mean we can kiss?”

“Yes, I mentioned that already. Just... you wanna go out?”

He nodded frantically and put his hands on Gaja’s shoulders. She leaned over him and pecked his lips.

“You want more?” She asked and he nodded.

While teasing him with short but strong lip kisses, they heard a familiar melody escaping through the hotel.

“Is that... *Orion*⁹?” Gaja asked.

“Yes, that is definitely *Orion*,” Miloš said.

9 *Orion* is a Slovenian song written by Gregor Strniša and composed by Jure Robežnik. One of the versions is sung by Marjana Deržaj and the other by Katja Levstik. Albeit it *does* refer to a constellation.

“You know that song?!”

“Yeah, that orchestra at the start gives it away.”

“Let’s go sing it then! Come on!”

She grabbed his hand and the two ran back into the conference room, just in time before the first verse. Everyone also began to sing. To Miloš, this was the only song that had a form of decency, unlike some of the earlier that only focus on the male side of falling in love. Those songs may be catchy by themselves, but it is *Orion* that really speaks volumes about what it is like to be in love.

Though, Miloš felt something was missing from the picture. Who was Gaja even fighting? Nature? God himself? While singing, he tried to remember who it was exactly. Not for long, though, for he focused more on singing alongside Gaja, his real girlfriend, perhaps the only one who knew who she fought. The two kissed one more time after the song ended.

But how did Nuša cross the boundary between reality and fantasy? And most importantly, where did she get all those cannons from? Unfortunately, nobody knows and may sadly never know. But, as they say, we can only imagine...

END

No make-believe girlfriends were harmed in the making of this story

“Playing cupid”

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