

In a Grid

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In a Grid no. 9



Texts:

Justyna Domasłowska-Szulc, Rusalka, J.Ś.G., Sztylet, Mysza, Kara vel Boska, Paula, A, Zara, Madalena, Panie Prezydencie, proszę o ułaskawienie, Gumisia, HINA, Agnieszka, Ewa, Iwona, Katarzyna, AZ, MDM, Sylva

Illustrations:

A, Natalia Gadzinowska, Monika Hajdukiewicz, Agnieszka Semaniszyn-Konat, Julia Regulska, Monika Karczmarczyk, Aleksandra Głowacka, Magdalena Sałaciak, Małgorzata Jabłońska, Kamelia, HINA, Zuzanna Zysiek, Kinga Piątkowska, Wiktor Lingo, Sylwia Nagórna, Julia Wieczorkiewicz. Rusalka, Maja Kurasińska, Weronika Baran, Maja Wroniszewska, Zofia Grynda

Cover:

Małgorzata Jabłońska, Piotr Szewczyk

Illustrations on the inside front and inside back cover:

Gala

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Editorial Team

Editor-in-chief of the 9th issue:

Agata Maczkowska

Artistic Director:

Małgorzata Jabłońska

Graphic design and typesetting:

Piotr Szewczyk

Program supervision:

st.szer. Iga Kuśmirek

(Areszt Śledczy w Warszawie-Grochowie)



SLUŻBA
WIĘZIENNA

Volunteers working on the texts:

Magdalena Wychowska

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a <http://wkratke.fundacjademkultury.pl/>

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Publisher

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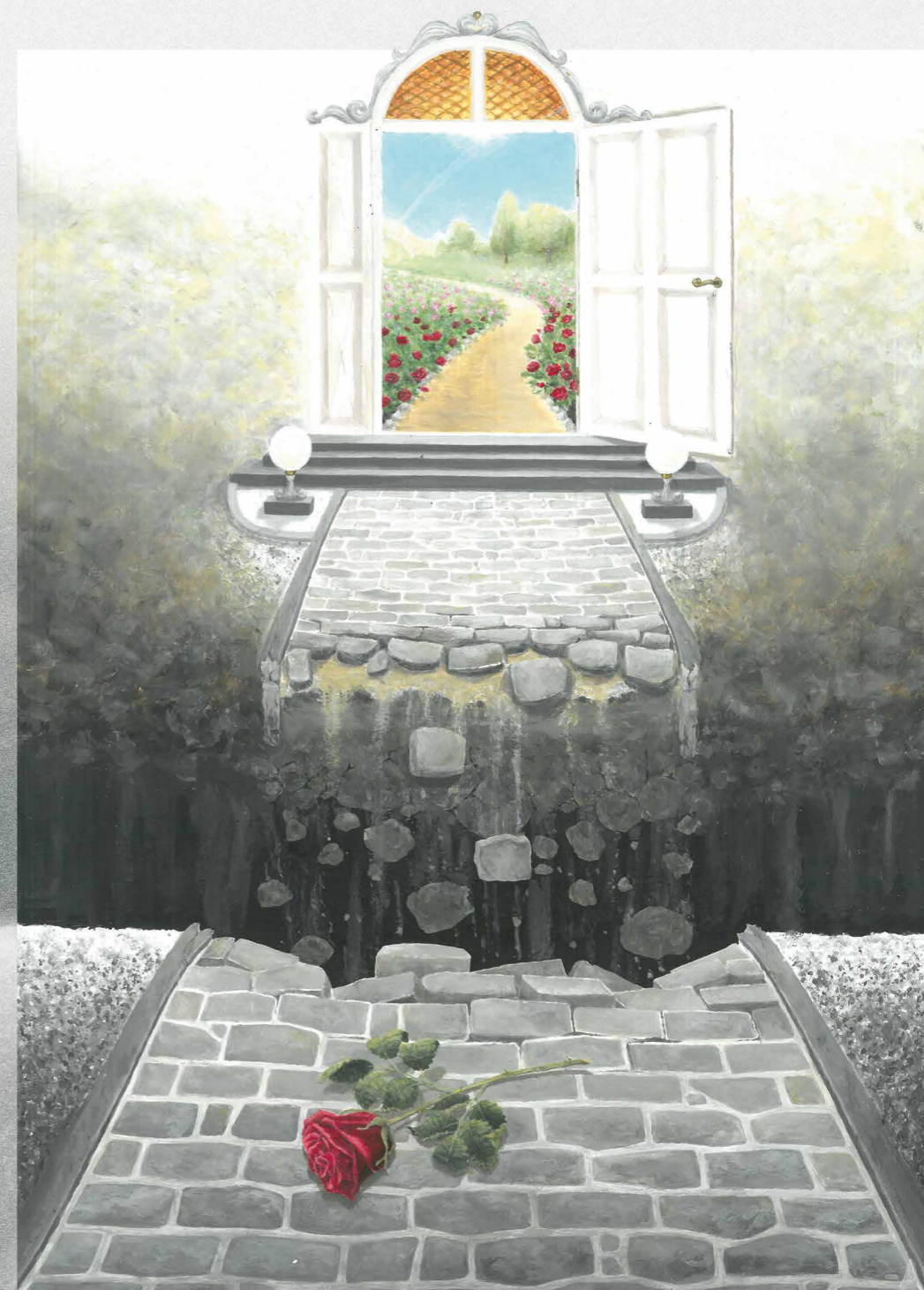
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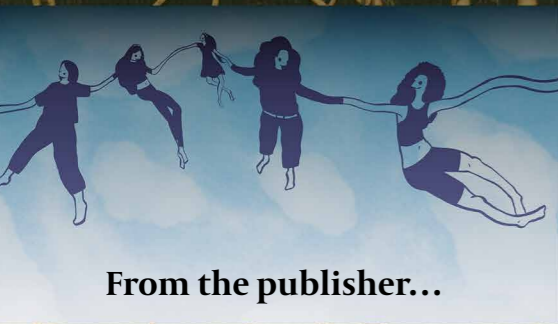


Uniwersytet
SWPS

English translation

Dorota Koziarska





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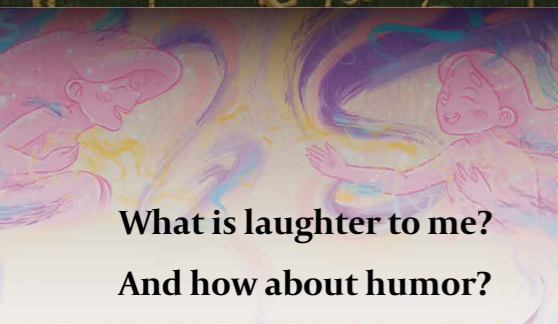


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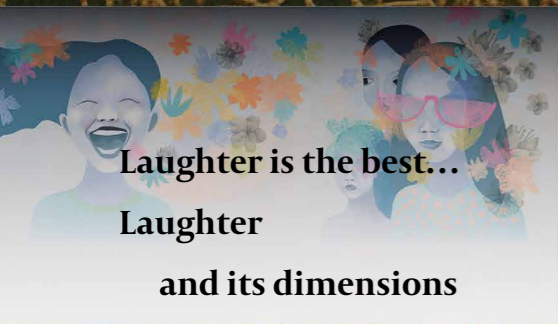


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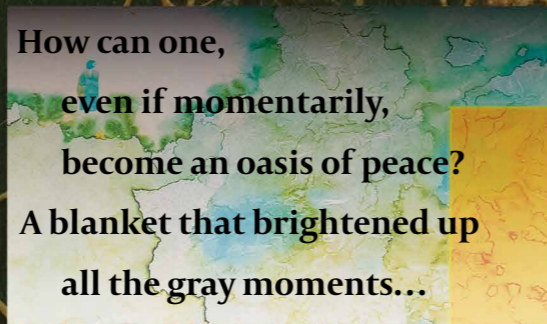


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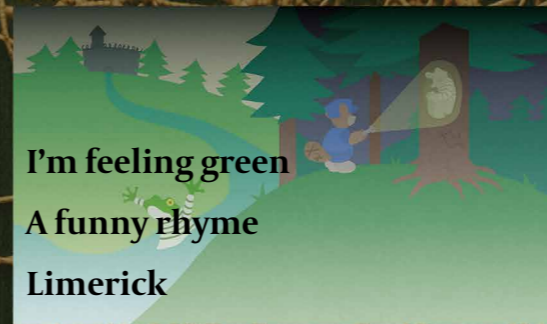
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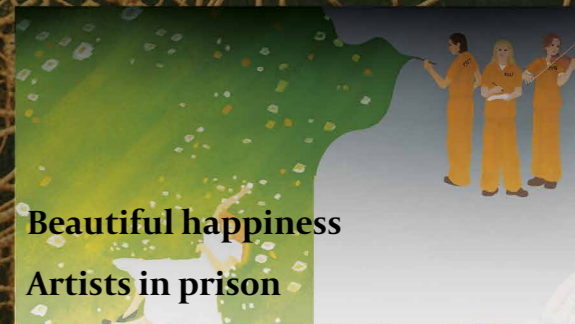
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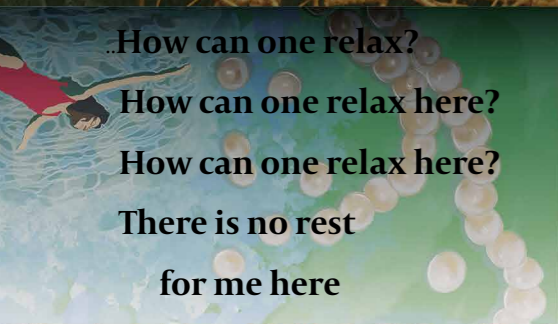


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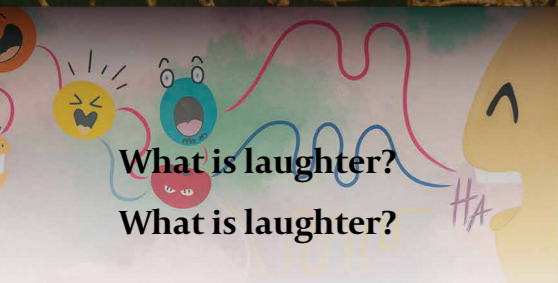


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Did you know...



From the publisher...

“In a Grid” magazine is published by the Culture House Foundation. The first issue came out in 2013 initiated by Leszek Wejcman, who held a creative writing workshops for a group of women incarcerated at the Warsaw-Grochów Detention Centre and invited artists from outside of prison to collaborate. Since then, nine issues of the magazine have been published. The composition of the editorial staff inside the prison has been changing naturally along with the changing situation of the inmates – someone would leave the unit, someone return years later, a new person would join.

For the past four years, the graphic design and illustrations have been the work of artists associated with the Department of Graphic Design at the SWPS University in Wrocław – under the supervision of Dr. Małgorzata Jabłońska and

Dr. Piotr Szewczyk. It is due to their effort that “In a Grid” gained its recognizable, beautiful graphic form.

Each issue is overseen by a different editor. For the ninth issue this job was done by Agata Maczkowska – an attentive and sensitive editor, who for many weeks created the texts together with their authors – women serving prison sentences.

The overriding idea of “In a Grid” is that the magazine should touch on socially important issues while at the same time enchanting with its graphic form.

The visual side is an integral part of the content and reinforces the message included in the authors’ narratives.

However, the most important thing for us is that the magazine reaches the hands of prisoners. And it does. Thanks to the co-financing of editorial work and printing costs by the Minister of Culture and National Heritage as part of the “Periodicals” program, “In a Grid” gets published in print and distributed to prison libraries throughout the country. This is possible thanks to the long-term cooperation between the Culture House Foundation and the Prison Service as well as the enormous support that the project receives from its employees – from the KO educator, Senior Sgt. Iga Kuśmirek from the detention centre in Warsaw-Grochów, to the staff at the Office of the Director General of the Prison Service.

The online version is available for readers on the outside at:

<https://wkratke.fundacjadmokultury.pl/>

Thanks to the collaboration of many people – on both sides of the wall – good things get created. This is the story of “In a Grid”, or at least part of it. We shall continue writing it together. Today you are holding in your hands, reading and looking at the ninth issue of “In a Grid”.

Justyna Domasłowska-Szulc

What is laughter to me? And how about humor?

Laughter has a relaxing effect on me, my body and mind.

After all, laughter affects our entire body: the cardiovascular, respiratory and hormonal systems, the immune and central nervous systems.

Laughter exercises and relaxes muscles, increases metabolism, improves breathing, stimulates circulation, lowers blood pressure and stress hormone levels.

Laughter reduces anxiety, alleviates insomnia, improves the mood, increases the levels of energy, vitality and hope. It keeps the concentration of dopamine and serotonin at the right level, improves memory, strengthens the ability to think creatively and solve problems.

What's an interesting phenomenon is the fact that...

Laughter increases our kindness towards other people and the willingness to help.

Laughter also strengthens bonds.

Laughter, cheerfulness – just like yawning, by the way – are contagious! They cause our mood to catch on.

What about humour then?

Humor is the ability to see the funny side in different situations and draw pleasure from that. Humor is the spark each person is born with, it's a natural openness to playfulness and pleasure.

Humor and laughter have a great power to improve the quality of my difficult and complicated life – they are an effective remedy. They make life more enjoyable and increase

the feeling of happiness. They distract me, if only momentarily, from ongoing problems.

My life is certainly not a bed of roses, very often something goes wrong, something crumbles or collapses. But instead of sinking deeper and whining: "Why does the fate have it in for me?" I figure out how to get the upper hand in the situation, solve the problem, in most cases with a sense of humor and a smile on my face.

After all, in life it's always give and take, so looking on the bright side in every situation really pays off.

Laughter is very important to me – it helps me go through moments of crisis more peacefully and has a positive effect on my whole body, and as Patch Adams used to say, "Humor is the antidote to all ills" and he was definitely right :)

Therefore: let's laugh a tender, warm, kind laugh, sincere and loud :)

Ha, ha, ha :)

Rusalka



Laughter is the best...

Laughter.

It's a lifesaver for me.

I laugh at situations.

I laugh in situations.

I laughs at myself.

And the latter helps me to be truly alive.

When I find myself in a difficult situation, surprised by it, I then surprise those around me with laughter – I gain some distance.

When I am in a state of painful thoughts, sometimes painful, I try to find the end of this suffering and discover the good.

I conquer it with laughter, loud or quiet, solitary or exposed. I tend to have fun when something funny happens ostensibly, and that simply relaxes me.

Bottom line? Let's laugh!, because it's... GOOD!

Ha, ha, haaa :)

J.Ś.G. Sztylet

Laughter and its dimensions

Laughter.

It is something like...

it can amuse anyone.

Laughter.

that's when positive endorphins get released.

What dimensions can it have?

Large dimensions can it have...

in different sizes and renditions.

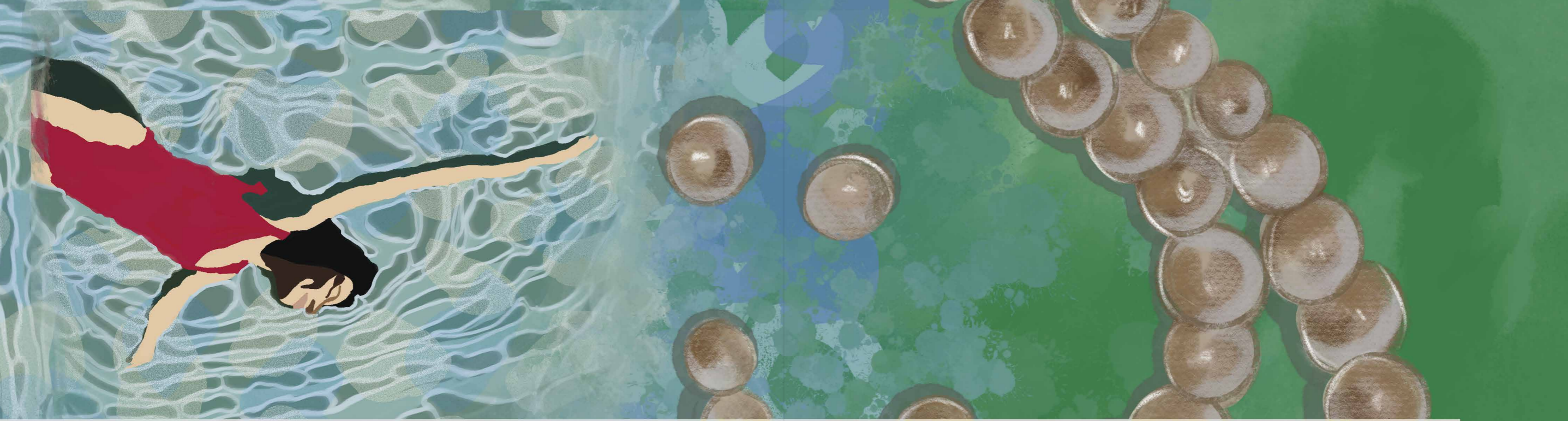
For instance...

in funny situations or jokes told and when we do something silly.

After all we also laugh when we watch comedies.

(funny) comedies

Mysza



How can one relax?

When I was little, my favorite form of relaxation was going to the forest to collect flowers and building houses for elves, observing and feeding animals, when I came back from my grandmother's, this relaxation would turn into walking around various places where I would look for magic pebbles, plants, as they contributed to my magical treasure box... where I would store every priceless moment of feeling carefree and safe... Today I am where I am, and what relaxes me is everything I do for my loved ones, crocheting, painting, creating jewelry out of beads, because I know how much pleasure that brings them, and joy and smile have a soothing effect on me.

Kara vel Boska

How can one relax here?

In this gloomy place where it's hard to relax, I try to get some rest while doing origami and diamond painting, then I quieten my mind, and my brain focuses on those only. In my childhood, I used to relax while playing hopscotch. I remember that when I was a child, I used to go for, let's call it secret walks, hiding from my grandmother, to a kind of little forest where I would look for squirrels which fascinates me to this day. In the park in Żyrardów, my hometown, funny thing, squirrels (all of them) respond to the name Basia. They approach people. That for me was the best form of rest. Escape from the house where laughter had been forgotten, so I would look for ways to relax. I tend to rest in nature. In here I escape into manual work.

Paula

How can one relax here?

The only time I am able to relax in here is when it is quiet. I like to lie with my eyes closed and "watch the matrix" - not the real thing ;) - what I mean is playing a "movie" inside my head, imagining a nicer reality. The most satisfying relaxation - when I stack up a million plans/chores on my shoulders (doing the washing, writing a letter, etc.), and finally - after a few hours of failed attempts to act, even though I CAN'T BE BOTHERED - I let go, put everything off till an unspecified "tomorrow", right away lying down becomes a million times more pleasant.

A

There is no rest for me here

When the time comes to sleep, a painful truth occurs to me. I have done nothing all day, because what I do here is no work or effort, yet I feel like I've crawled across a battlefield full of mines or as if I had been run over by a road roller. I feel so exhausted physically and mentally that I sometimes cry. Is it normal to cry out of fatigue, caused most likely by this cruel kind of rest? I want so badly to finally go back to where I came from and get so very tired that I will finally be able to safely and truly RELAX.

J.Ś.G. Sztylet

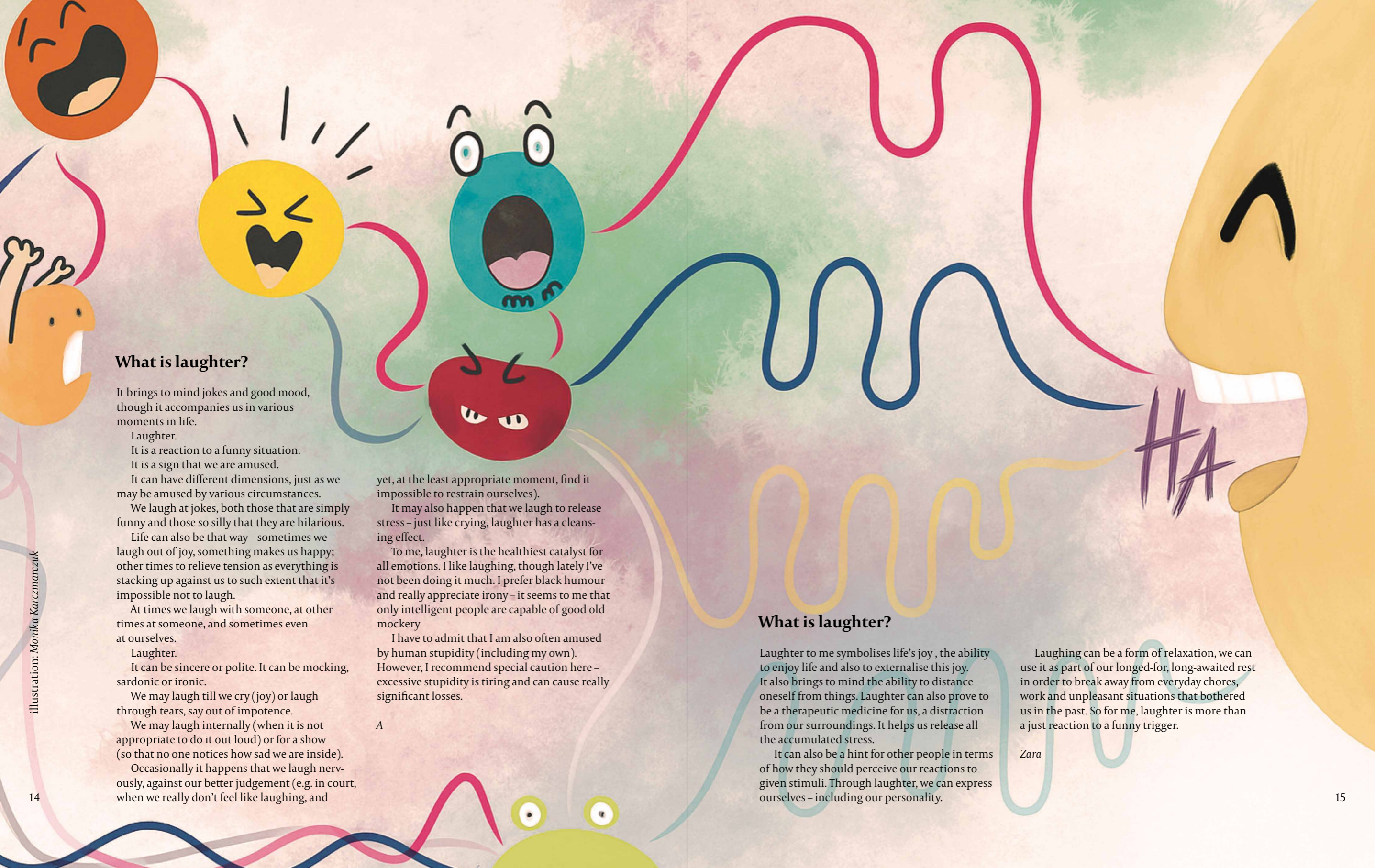


illustration: Monika Karcmarczuk

What is laughter?

It brings to mind jokes and good mood, though it accompanies us in various moments in life.

Laughter.
It is a reaction to a funny situation.
It is a sign that we are amused.

It can have different dimensions, just as we may be amused by various circumstances.
We laugh at jokes, both those that are simply funny and those so silly that they are hilarious.
Life can also be that way – sometimes we laugh out of joy, something makes us happy; other times to relieve tension as everything is stacking up against us to such extent that it's impossible not to laugh.

At times we laugh with someone, at other times at someone, and sometimes even at ourselves.

Laughter.
It can be sincere or polite. It can be mocking, sardonic or ironic.

We may laugh till we cry (joy) or laugh through tears, say out of impotence.

We may laugh internally (when it is not appropriate to do it out loud) or for a show (so that no one notices how sad we are inside).

Occasionally it happens that we laugh nervously, against our better judgement (e.g. in court, when we really don't feel like laughing, and

yet, at the least appropriate moment, find it impossible to restrain ourselves).

It may also happen that we laugh to release stress – just like crying, laughter has a cleansing effect.

To me, laughter is the healthiest catalyst for all emotions. I like laughing, though lately I've not been doing it much. I prefer black humour and really appreciate irony – it seems to me that only intelligent people are capable of good old mockery

I have to admit that I am also often amused by human stupidity (including my own). However, I recommend special caution here – excessive stupidity is tiring and can cause really significant losses.

A

What is laughter?

Laughter to me symbolises life's joy, the ability to enjoy life and also to externalise this joy. It also brings to mind the ability to distance oneself from things. Laughter can also prove to be a therapeutic medicine for us, a distraction from our surroundings. It helps us release all the accumulated stress.

It can also be a hint for other people in terms of how they should perceive our reactions to given stimuli. Through laughter, we can express ourselves – including our personality.

Laughing can be a form of relaxation, we can use it as part of our longed-for, long-awaited rest in order to break away from everyday chores, work and unpleasant situations that bothered us in the past. So for me, laughter is more than a just reaction to a funny trigger.

Zara

Rest

Here in this place, rest for me means above all reading books, sometimes I also relax in the evenings while quietly watching an interesting movie. Lying down and listening to music through headphones is also a form of relaxation for me, while I can put my mind to thinking about my future plans, goals and dreams. Rest is for me a form of recuperation, quieting down and a moment when I can reboot.

When I was a child, I would rest while playing on the console, relaxing in a deckchair in the yard, having walks in the forest and bicycle trips. I would also relax while travelling abroad, when I would partake in swimming in the pool and sunbathing. Spending time with family and friends, playing board games and karaoke.

I believe that every person needs time to rest, during which they have the opportunity to express themselves, dedicate themselves to their passions and interests.

Zara



An adventure with meditation

The adventure with meditation began... when exactly? Hmm... I don't recall the exact date, but I remember what started it, a few years ago I was at another place, I went out for a walk, the weather was beautiful, I sat on the grass, closed my eyes, straightened my back, and immersed myself in my breath. I realized that my mind was crowded with unnecessary thoughts. In addition to that I decided to clear my thoughts... And it swept me away, because what became the seed drew me in towards deepening my knowledge regarding meditation. Cutting off thoughts; the breath, the sounds, the energy, grounding, it's like brushing your teeth, once you learn it, it becomes second nature. It becomes one of the obligatory activities, the most pleasant ones. Meditation soothes my nervous system, calms my body, and even raises my endorphins' levels.

Let's be clear though, I'm not perfect when it comes to daily meditation practice, as lately what happens is I start meditating in a lying down position and fall asleep every time... I've

heard many times that beginners, with no experience will fall asleep if meditating while lying down, I'm not a beginner, but I'm not experienced either. I'm learning to master staying awake, with little effect for the time being, but as they say, practice makes the master :) Keep your fingers crossed, maybe I'll get it right soon :)... If you know a good hack, I will happily welcome good advice :)

Kara vel Boska



Fruit spongecake

In spite of it being a surprise visit
 It was easily spotted by the ladies present.
 Somewhat hidden, unobtrusive, at a distance,
 We all tried to sneak a peek, waiting for its entrance.
 Despite of us having quite different tastes
 All were in agreement in this particular case.
 Each of us just wanted to give in to pleasure
 To exclusively own it, be in seventh heaven.
 Fierce competition ensued for that reason
 There was only one to share between a dozen.
 More than one head abuzz with decadent thoughts of
 Grabbing it with a hand, then putting it in the mouth
 Makes me smile to imagine what is on your mind
 and the thoughts you are having
 are my favourite kind.
 Though wild associations made you burn inside
 it was all, Dear Ladies, down to a fruity sponge.

Madalena



The juicy flavour

The juicy flavour of the strawberry
 reminded me of my childhood
 The super-fresh, delicious crumble looked
 like the little clouds floating through the sky
 that I liked watching when I was a child.
 It was very sweet and delicious.

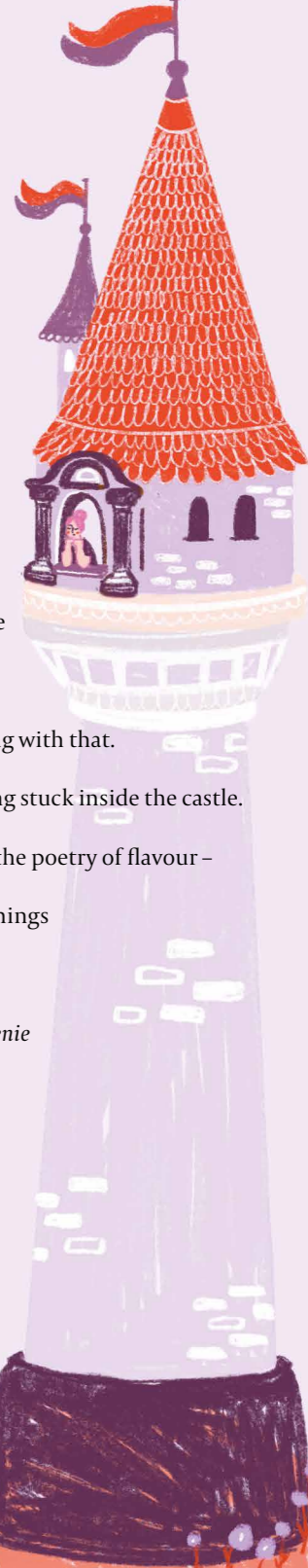
Mysza



Eating cake

The thought of an activity so simple
 and pleasant as having cake
 brings to mind activities contrasting with that.
 Such as the exhausting state of being stuck inside the castle.
 Grinding monotony in contrast to the poetry of flavour –
 contemplating life's great shortcomings

Panie Prezydencie, proszę o ułaskawienie





How can one, even if momentarily, become an oasis of peace?

I shall tell you how to be an oasis of peace and never rush anywhere.

And so, take it from me, it is very easy to achieve this state, and here are the two most important ingredients you need if you want to create your own recipe.

– We press PAUSE and find a place where we can quieten our minds and relax. (Important: this is something every one of us needs – to find a moment to hit reset – don't forget about it.)

When you are free, you can do it anywhere, at work or at home, in the case of us inmates, during a walk or inside the cell. – I highly recommend meditation with the breath. (On the outside, remember to turn off your phone and TV or computer, and in our case the radio and TV – this will make it easier to

clear the mind) I'm sure everyone could do with instructions on their personal reset and slowing down their pace.

After all, we live in a time when everyone's always in a rush and has no time for anything.

And in our case... We live under such conditions that we constantly fight for something and we need to recharge our batteries to have strength for new times and new possibilities.

And finally, briefly: take care of yourselves and your minds!

Mysza

A blanket that brightened up all the gray moments...

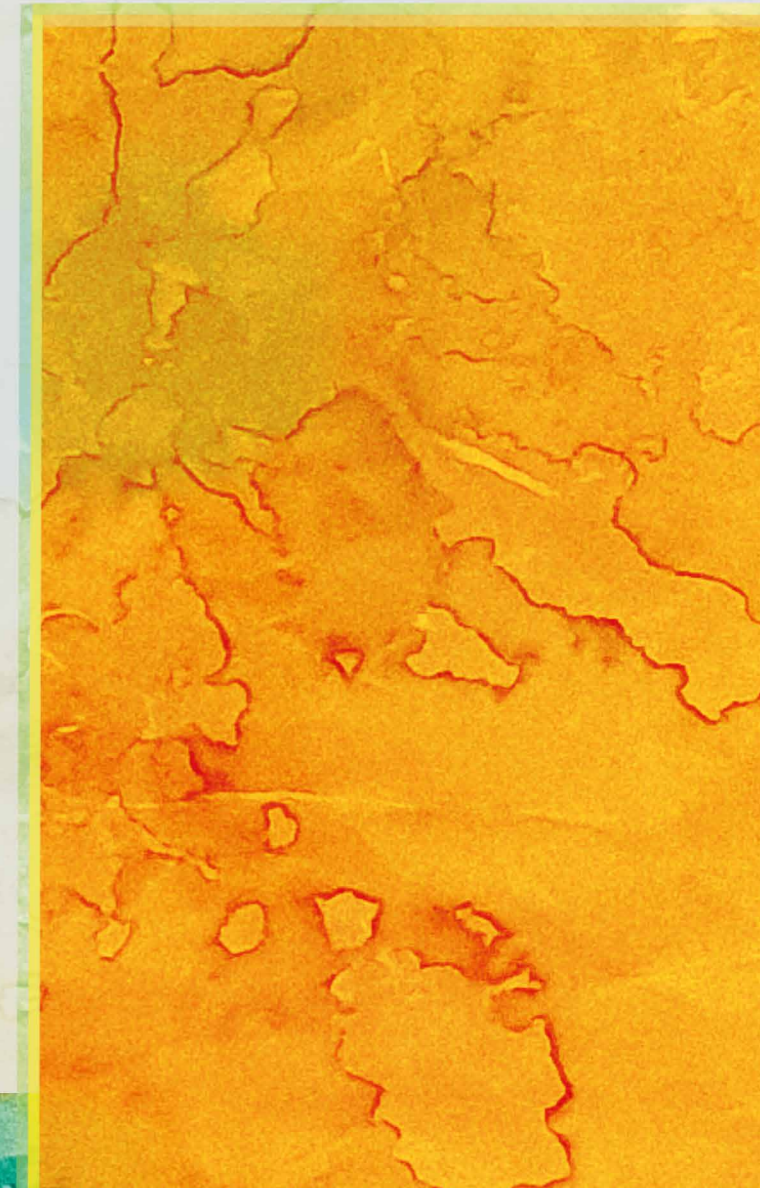
The story of the magic blanket began at the worst moment of my life, days got shrouded in dark thoughts, a torrent of tears, the only thing that made sense was that nothing made sense.

And then for reasons unknown, a blanket suddenly appeared in my head, beautiful, large, colorful, why a blanket, I don't know... but I had all the things necessary to create it, a multitude of colorful, thick yarns and a crochet hook to knit it.

Since there were no family members who could hug me around at the time, without thinking much, I got down to creating it, in the literal sense of the word. Each loop became a thief of tears shed, a thief of pain that pierced me through and through.

The result was that it cleansed my days, my soul, took off the burden. And, I swear, it's effects were so soothing, that I started to smile, beautiful dreams appeared, and days kept getting better and better... I believe in its magical power, since it healed me and made my world a better place. I decided to pass it on to someone who is a wonderful human with a good heart. And the blanket will certainly guard „Rumpelek” and give her only beautiful dreams... as colorful as the blanket itself.

Kara vel Boska



Spring

Spring, rather than being just one of the four seasons, is a metaphor for rebirth, the time when nature, as well as people, wake up from their winter sleep. „Spring will come eventually” – we keep telling ourselves on dark, freezing days, longingly awaiting the moment when the first rays of the sun break through the clouds and animate everything around. Spring is a time when we shake off the heavy burden of winter thoughts, so we can – lightly and with renewed energy – enter a new cycle of life. The first warm spring days are like a balm for the soul. The moment the sun’s heat becomes stronger, it’s good to go outside, sit on a park bench, book in hand, and let the light and fresh air speak to us directly. It is the perfect time for the kind of reading that inspires change. Spring brings us

to life, lets us overcome adversity while finding strength inside, gives us a chance to open up fresh perspectives and a new chapter in life.

In the context of spring, which symbolizes rebirth and new possibilities, our lot becomes a metaphor for the life cycle, just as spring brings new buds and promises of growth so we too go through the process of inner transformations, reflecting on our lives and experiences. Spring inspires discovery of new paths, new challenges and opening up to change, and our life experiences show that it is sometimes worth it to stop for a while, look within and take a brave step towards new possibilities.

Gumisia



10 dni

I’m already one foot outside the gate. My sentence ends in exactly 10 days time. My head is filled with so many thoughts that I can’t focus on any one of them.

What should I eat first?

Who do I need to call?

Have I gone feral?

How much has happened while I was away?

I’m as happy as a kid on the way to the amusement park. Including for the sake of all the stress that’s ahead of me. I already have a plan and a schedule for the first days after I’m out. Right after I get out I’m dashing to get some paints and doing a legal throwup with my homies in Służewiec – painting is what I’ve missed most while in prison. The next day, I have an unpleasant meet-up with my ex, that is packing all my

belongings and then moving to my new crib. I have to change my address at the bank and other institutions. Then a moment of respite, in the form of a trip to my grandparents’ place in Masuria region to spend a little time with



family, but also to become civilised again and quieten down. Looking for a job is another item on my list. Luckily, on top of Polish, I am fluent in two foreign languages, so I think finding a job should be easy.

And now I’m reading the remaining books, solving the remaining crossword puzzles and finishing up my last crayon throwups – and that’s the end of my adventures in Kamchatka.

HINA



Five short surreal

While missing my good looking partner,
I start smoking more often.

Unfortunately, while in custody,
I get annoyed by some of the inmates.

Luckily - I read a lot and think about
Sebastian.

Agnieszka

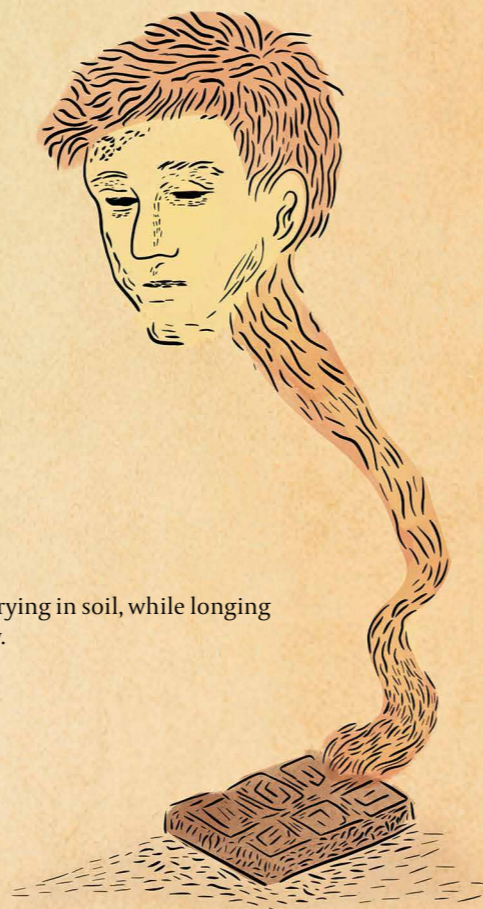
Juicy chocolate? It is frying in soil, while longing
for a bright tomorrow.

Ewa



I was stupid, in my head and heart.
I had long suppressed my emotions,
I longed for freedom of the soul, the mind,
but deep down I was timid,
like a small child in a fog.
Unfortunately, I persisted
in this fear and pain,
but now...
now, luckily...

Iwona



A little broken robot circled the factory,
longing for some batteries, unfortunately,
the place had been abandoned, luckily, it pulled
some magic spell and gained some power.

Katarzyna



Zara

An oasis of peace

On a beautiful sunny day, a young woman,
trying to make the best out of her „forced
holiday” while lodging at a guesthouse
called „Under the Pear Tree”, was lounging
on a not-so-comfortable mattress that was
digging into her buttocks, and reading a travel
book, while longing for her own “oasis of peace”.

Unfortunately nagging thoughts would
interfere with her reading and bring her
back to the grey concrete reality along with
an sudden surge of disturbing memories.

Luckily she's not alone in all this.



For my husband

There are days when I miss you
Then I wonder if you' are still the same person
Hasn't time changed you while I've been away
Will your touch feel the same, unchanged
I miss you though it's still a long way till the time of
our encounter under the rain
our encounter among trees and branches
our encounter, that will be a turn of our fate,
will be a point of return for us
are we going to be the same though
or maybe life has already changed us
when we get to explore each other subtly
time will tell, and God will show the way.

As i've been asking God, for all to be well
for Him to unite us for better and worse.

I love you and I'm waiting...

J.Ś.G. Sztylet

Loss

How do I describe this foul feeling?
A kind of fracture, somewhat rotten.
Yes, i admit it, it hurts, it does.
Though I say nothing - it's in my eyes.
It's hard for me to leave and quit it,
Here I get time to digest everything.
I'll walk out the gate, look ahead,
yet I will still be without you.
It was love, the real thing,
not from a TV show, some cinema flick.
Inside this cell, bars in the window,
The meaning of loss - now I know.

HINA



Failure: a bitter but effective medicine

A Sometimes our lives turn out in such a way that in spite of our best efforts, what we aim for proves impossible to achieve. (...).

But I can turn this failure of mine into understanding of what to do differently next time, sometimes though, failure is also a teacher of much deeper wisdom. For me, it's a breakdown of understanding, of my story that I have been telling myself.

Our minds like simple and coherent stories. We tend to seek out information that confirms what we already know while at the same time ignoring things that counter what we have learned so far or are difficult to reconcile with it.

Failure results in our being confronted with the collapse of a narrative regarding ourselves. These stories can be big or small. Failure doesn't always mean we're not good enough, while successes – that we are moving in the right direction. Especially given that when everything goes well, people rarely take time to reflect on whether what they're doing is what they really want. It's easy for us to learn from successes – when our

behaviour gets rewarded, we learn to utilise it more often, hoping for a reward. The problem is that life is not a continuous string of successes and victories. There will come a point, when something doesn't work out for us, someone leaves us. (...).

We will all be affected by illness and death of our loved ones first, then our own. And it will not mean that we stopped trying or did something wrong. We have to recognise that there are external factors weighing on us. It's just that life turns out in such a way that in spite of our best efforts, what we aim for is impossible to achieve. Failures grind us to a halt. They help us see where we are from a fresh perspective. To verify in what direction we are going. They make the narrative that we've been living for a while cease making sense.

We experience the feeling of losing control and have to make an effort to open up to the new.

I shall recount a story about a poor peasant, which illustrates, to the point, the things that happen regardless of what we desire and bring

us luck when we consider something to be a misfortune.

Here it is: "A poor farmer had only a horse and a son. His horse ran away, but after a few days returned bringing back a herd of horses. The son fell off a horse while trying to break it and became disabled. However, a moment later, a war broke out and due to his disability he was not taken to the army. As a consequence, he was the only young man in the village to survive. (...) And then the farmer had only one thing to say: Good luck or bad luck, who knows? I don't know the whole picture. (...) It is a narrative about the fact that things "just happen". (...), but our minds immediately try to judge them as clear-cut.

When we recognise something subjectively as a disaster, we use a label that says "failure". It is a form of limitation to our thinking. Should we consider the event from a further perspective, however, what we call failure at this point may turn out to be an important turning point and a step towards the most beautiful possible

version of OURSELVES!, through which we fulfil our human potential.

Emotional pain.

When we lose a narrative that used to strongly define us, our minds need time to adapt to the new situation. We need time for mourning. In it, there is a place for sadness, anger, jealousy, regret, anxiety regarding what our life would look like from now on. (...) On the one hand, the desire to escape is understandable. We don't want to touch what hurts, which in case of physical pain has evolutionary justification. We don't need to take any special actions to cope with the grief. It is enough that we keep taking care of things that are actually important to us. The craters each of our failures leaves behind make our inner landscape unique and the flowers of values nurtured there – create the fragile beauty of our lives, susceptible to failure as they are.

The saying: "I'd rather be happy than be right".



Currently, many of us are much more likely to choose being right, though, then end up alone and unhappy. I recommend the book called “Wherever Go, There You Are” by Jon Kabat-Zinn. It talks about “mindfulness,” an ancient Buddhist practice that has a profound meaning for contemporary world. It involves investigation into who we are, deepening of our understanding of the world, nurturing in ourselves of an appreciation for the fullness of every moment in life. Mindfulness is sometimes called the heart of meditation. It signifies a particular type of attention: conscious, directed toward the present moment and non-judgmental. Such attention develops great awareness, clarity and acceptance of current circumstances. It awakens us to the fact that life develops through individual moments only. If we go through many moments without being fully conscious, we may not just overlook what is most valuable in life, but we also fail to realise our own opportunities for development and transformation. Reduced

awareness of the present moment inevitably creates further needs and problems, also due to our unconscious and automatic actions and behaviors, often driven by deep-seated fears and insecurities.

“Mindfulness” (here and now) allows us to move from a standstill in a simple but reliable way, to reconnect with our own wisdom and vitality. It gives us the opportunity to choose the direction and quality of our lives, including relationships with family, work, the environment, the entire Earth and, most importantly, one’s relationship with oneself as a person.

When we resolve to be “here and now”, we need to be prepared for it. We have to make the decision at the right moment in life, at the moment when we are ready to listen attentively to our own voices, our own hearts, our own breath – to simply be present for them and with them without having to go anywhere or do something better or something else. It’s hard work.

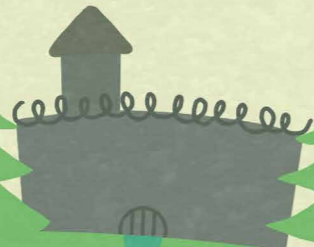
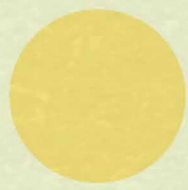
It is particularly easy to miss the fact that we do actually think all the time. The constant stream of thoughts flowing through our minds leaves very little room for inner silence. We almost never give ourselves permission to simply “BE”. All too often our actions rather than being conscious are forced by utterly ordinary thoughts and impulses flowing through the mind like a rushing river, if not a waterfall! (...) This stream sweeps us away and finally drowns us, carrying us to a place we may not want to visit; or we may not even realise where we are heading.

Mindfulness teaches us how to get out of this stream, sit on its bank, listen to it, and learn from it, then use its energy so that it guides rather than torments us. And no matter what we call it, mindfulness meditation or adoration, the one important thing is to set aside a few moments, pause the flow of time and experience YOURSELF.

Henry David Thoreau said: “Only that day dawns to which we are awake”. (...) It is important to face yourself and gain peace, solace and the safety of the soul, EVEN if it lasts for just a moment.

AZ

The text was created on the basis of the Newsweek articles ‘Grieving Not Becoming a Mother’ and ‘How to Build a Successful Long-Term Relationship’.



I'm feeling green

Greenery soothes the nerves – they keep telling me,
 I guess they have never been stuck in the clink.
 The greenery that surrounds me,
 makes my eyelids swell,
 If this keeps going on I'll need stronger meds.
 It seems someone thought that green tableware,
 Improves the taste and quality of the dishes served.
 Well, it doesn't work, let me tell you, dears,
 When you have a kitchen that cooks crappy meals.
 Dressed in green – in this inmate's tailcoat,
 Round the prison yard in circles I trot
 And so, respected ladies, I keep wondering,
 When are they going to paint the bogs green
 So that even sitting down on the can every day,
 could take place in an optimistic state!
 All this green – my frayed nerves get so soothed by it,
 that whatever happens – I don't give a sh...



illustration: Sylwia Nagórna



A funny rhyme

In Olszynka Grochowska there's
 this Lady Warden,
 Nothing in the cell can be hidden from her.
 Cell searches are sacred according to her
 She will turn over everything here.
 She counts, looks through things,
 throws an searches,
 there, one more item of clothing
 just got confiscated.

Limerick

In the Grochów prison there once was a man
 Who chatted at a window with his beloved one.
 One day a warden caught him in the act
 And, since the man would deny the fact,
 handed him a ticket which stated as the offence:
 "Illegal dealings with the forest".

How do I cope in prison?

For many, the topic may seem trivial. But for me it means tough years of fighting for myself. Not just my daily existence, but also for mental comfort, and prison is a place where it's not likely to find too much of such comfort. I would like to write about everything in this piece, but I don't know if I have the courage to do so, because my life has not been a bed of roses... I was brought up since childhood by an alcoholic father, a despot and tyrant with whom I've only been connected through bad traumatic experiences, and on top of that I suffer from the "Stockholm syndrome", that I was told about at the "DDA" therapy session.

I grew up without a mother, because she had been brought to suicide, by my father actually. Due to this fact, it was not easy for me to enter adult life either. From a young age I would seek escape from my father, I was neurotic, had suicidal thoughts and terrible depression. I was bashful and lived in permanent fear of my father, until the day came that I crossed paths with drugs and found "illusory" solace in them, but

really I just opened the so-called "Pandora's box" and got very lost, while wasting my life. At that point I would find comfort in drugs and was able to cope with my father. I simply became indifferent to everything related to him. I could write a lot about my life, but that's off topic. How I cope is paradoxically a difficult topic. I've already been here for almost three years and there's not much less ahead of me.

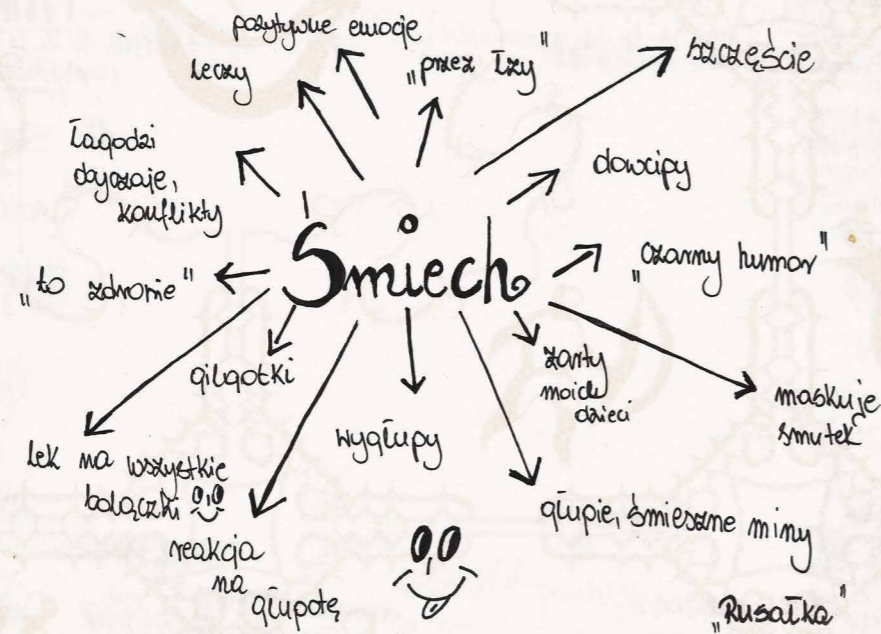
It is not easy for me to find myself and adapt in this place, because I am someone who has been wounded and is distrustful and suspicious of others, most likely because of my childhood. It's just that this place gives me lessons and subjects me to various tests, I mostly escape into reading books and The Holy Scripture and solving crossword puzzles, but this really only lasts for a moment, and in here there are a lot of such moments, too many. Regardless of what might happen, I will never feel good in here. Despite high levels of demoralization, pathology, verbal aggression mainly, though physical violence

does also happen, which exhausts me, I'm glad I have managed to hold on to MY OWN SELF...

Looking back at the life with my father, going back to traumatic memories, I automatically feel a deep longing for my Mom. Longing is a feeling that has been with me daily. What I miss the most is my mother - my support, the queen that I miss enormously and at the moment it's probably the only thing I find difficult to cope with, but that seems normal, after all everyone finds it impossible to come to terms with the loss of someone closest to them. I feel very lonely, so much so, it is hard for me to describe... I'm currently alone and it makes me so sad that my heart aches. I often put on a so-called "mask", I try to put on a brave face, because unfortunately it is such a peculiar place. Starting with the moment I open my eyes, I don't get a chance to see the sunny sky, I can only stare blankly at the bars and the plexiglass and imagine the beautiful day out there, a walk inside the catacombs is not a walk in the park. I could go on about ways of coping in here, but I have

simply no say in many situations. I'm helpless, powerless, and the lack of possibilities hinders healthy functioning. Undoubtedly, prison teaches humility, I think that the most important thing is to be able to change your approach and course of thinking completely, otherwise it will prove difficult to cope. Regardless of who you share a cell with, you absolutely always have to fight for yourself, for your emotions and existence. It's easier when you are locked up with people who are quiet, familiar and kind, but such people are few and far between. I've been in luck momentarily as I've been locked up inside one of the few quiet cells.

SYLA

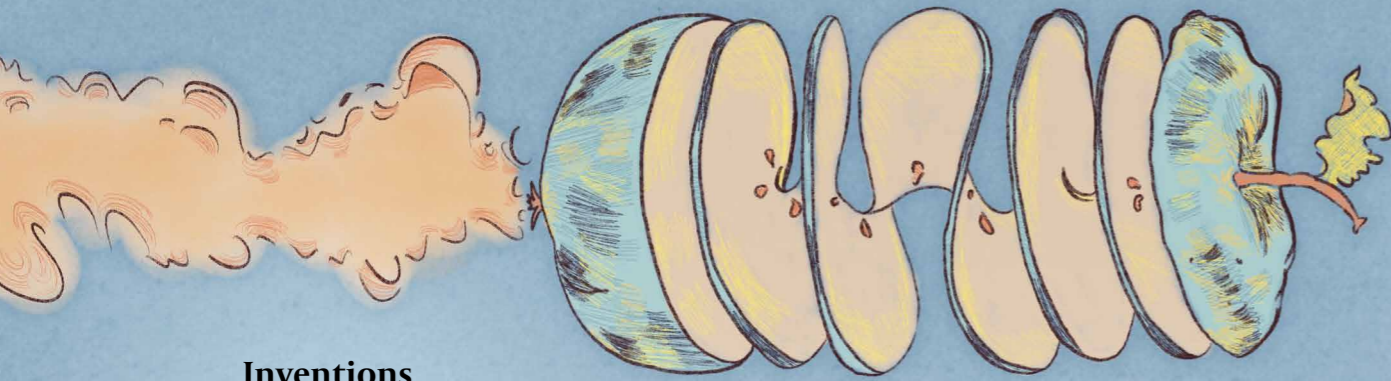


-A.-

Laughter associations:

- a discharge of internal tension
- expression of reactions, one's emotions and feelings
- massive joy of life
- we fill our spare time with it combined with relaxation
- great fun
- we cover difficult situations with it
- form of therapy
- replaces negative emotions
- form of distancing
- medicine

Zara



Inventions

Necessity is supposedly the mother of invention
Especially when it's a woman serving her sentence.
And yes, when it comes to the feminine
Making stuff – out of nothing – runs in our genes.

Bothered by the way your clothes are all creased?
Take a bowl, take some boiling water –
there's your iron sorted.



When you place period pads between the legs
there'll be nothing in the evenings
to keep you awake.

Even the lack of wings won't worry you, it's cool –
you've wrapped them around the legs of a stool.



Beautiful, bouncy Curls in copious amounts
can be sorted out with...
bottoms of yoghurt cups.

Nothing resists the creative power of the fair sex
Even a billionaire turns into a millionaire.

Makeup's not a problem, when
lacking foundation,
Take a spoonful of cocoa powder,
mix it into the lotion.

You won't find a crappy book,
even with a magnifying glass

Especially when there is no roll
to wipe down your a...

To hone your culinary passion
while practicing with pastry

you'll need to have some cows' milk stored and ready.

But it's not about milking cows, is it?

Have the carton? You have the tin –
that's just what you need.

Leave a woman unattended without supervision
a toilet brush rocket may well be her vision!

Madalena





Laughter as a therapy in hospital treatment of children

I am a mother of two boys aged 11 and 10. At the moment the boys are healthy and strong, even though each of them was born prematurely. The boys have been diagnosed with early childhood asthma and allergies, currently all but forgotten but it has not always been the case... Each of them have experienced health problems right from birth. Not a week would go by without either of them being sick. From the moment they were born visits to hospitals on average once a month have been a routine for our family. Chronic bronchitis or pneumonia, long hours spent by parents at the children's bedside resulted in hours of pain and suffering for the whole family... The mental state of both parents and children left much to be desired.

And it was at one of the critical moments during one of our many hospital stays that we learned about the phenomenal laughter therapy classes, which turned out to be beneficial for both our children and ourselves.

The hospital we were at was frequented by volunteers from a foundation that took it as its

goal to put a smile on the faces of patients in hospitals. For me as a parent and a mother, it was a strange idea, because how do you combine laughter with pain, suffering, lack of security and loneliness? My thinking turned out to be very wrong! Volunteers from the foundation used the beneficial properties of smiling to help children forget about fear and give them strength in their recovery, appropriately prepared for it with fancy costumes and colorful props. Their abilities allowed them to make patients laugh and add colour to the gray hospital reality of children.

It was due to those very volunteers that my younger son was not afraid to use the nebulization inhaler which he had to do several times a day! As a parent, I learned during the visits of

the volunteers, that laughter had a great impact on the functioning of the human body.

Scientific research have proven that laughter minimizes the risk of heart attack as it stimulates blood circulation, causing a decrease in cholesterol and blood pressure. While we laugh our internal organs get a massage, thanks to which our breathing deepens and our brain gets oxygenated. What's more, frequent giggling also has a positive effect on the immune system and the endorphins secreted reduce stress levels, improve the way we feel and bring relaxation. Not only does spontaneous laughter help to relieve frustration caused by difficult life circumstances, such as in our case, frequent hospital stays but it also has a positive effect on the perception of the world and improves human relationships.

Volunteers prepared animations with elements of laughter yoga, with the aim to provide emotional support to patients regardless of age and situation. Their therapy was aimed at both children and adults. For me, my children and the entire family, it was a "laughing time" and a distraction from the sad reality of the hospital.

Rusalka

Beautiful happiness

Beauty leads to delight: eyes, hearing, the sense of smell and, above all, the soul.

It is said that it's not the packaging that counts, but what's inside.

On the one hand, it's true, but if we stop and think about this phrase, it will turn out that beauty is nothing but our dream. What we imagine determines what or who we find interesting. That's what's BEAUTIFUL, because happiness is also BEAUTIFUL, and going further... Everyone wants to be BEAUTIFUL and possess BEAUTY, meaning HAPPINESS.

Let's be HAPPY and therefore BEAUTIFUL.

J.Ś.G. Sztylet



Artists in prison

Poring over some writing that is far from pleasing,

I wipe sweat off my forehead and start feeling queasy.

Who's punishment was greater, I read as I ponder

the author's while writing, or mine – reading, I wonder.

The level of my anger keeps on getting higher –

make such creative work an offence is what is required.

They will think twice before a piece gets submitted,

should it be judged by prosecutors, rather than the critic.

May the art's quality be assessed by k.k.



Bad reviews – let's convert those into prison stay.

Let's subject taste differences to a resolution and lock up bad writers inside institutions!

A simple rating system will thus come to be the artwork is good – if its author's still free.

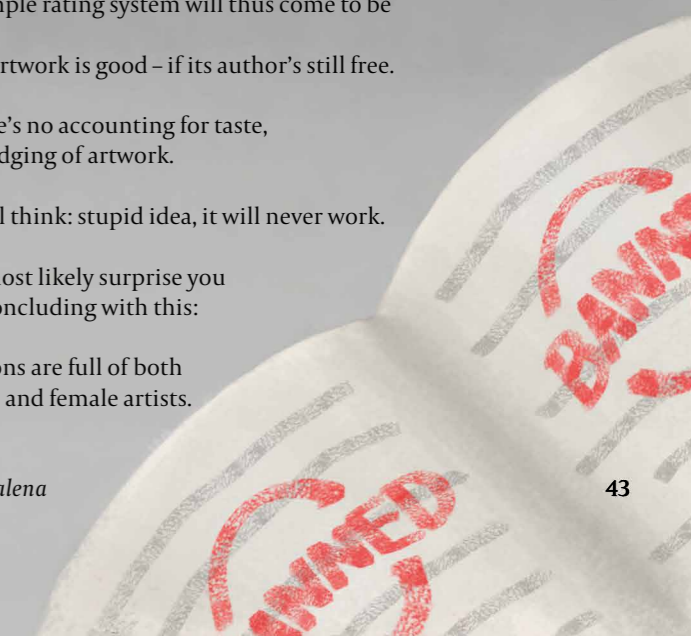
There's no accounting for taste, or judging of artwork.

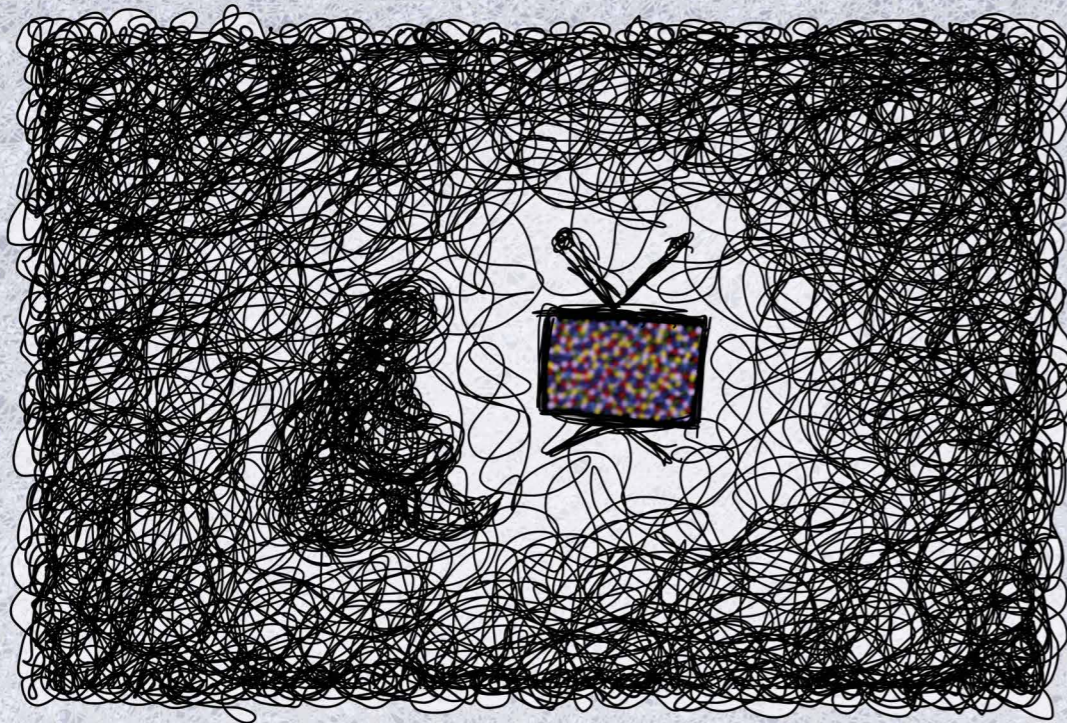
You'll think: stupid idea, it will never work.

I'll most likely surprise you by concluding with this:

prisons are full of both male and female artists.

Madalena





Life after

This time I am writing to you not from the penitentiary, but from the better side of the wall. A few weeks ago, I completed the “gap in my resume”. I had waited for this day for almost 3 years. Finally, it has come, and I’ve been trying to find myself in the new old reality. Prison is like a separate dimension, another planet. Time flows differently here. The environment is utterly different, different changes take place. People’s lives revolve around completely different things, they just live DIFFERENTLY. Even regular contact with one’s family won’t erase this barrier; We may seem to be up to date regarding everything, and yet it often resembles watching a short series broadcast once a week – you have it all figured out more or less, and yet you don’t live it every day, you

don’t ponder it all the time. You get different stimuli as a standard package, different worries and ongoing concerns. As a week goes by, when another phone call is approaching, you recall the details of the last conversations in your head again: what happened to whom, who you need to talk to, what to ask...

Over time, it really starts to feel like watching a telenovela on a dusty nineteen-inch TV screen. While being stuck in the can for several years, a person begins to simply vegetate. They stop despairing over what the prison time has interrupted or damaged. In order not to go mad, you switch to the “Stand By” mode – seemingly on, but really off. VEGETATION is the appropriate term here; You eat, drink, sleep, piss, breathe... and pretend to be alive. The opportunities

for any kin of development are close to none – CLOSE, because an ambitious person will always absorb something progressive, set at least a minimal goal to achieve. Either way, no matter how hard you try to move forward, you will always fall behind those who remain free.

Nowadays, after three wasted years (an it was not the first time) I’ve been trying to catch up on what I missed – technology, development, changes in the environment... I try to find my place among people again. It may well surprise you, but even despite the regular contact, after regaining freedom one has a problem finding oneself among their loved ones. At times, I feel like a visitor among my own family or friends, as if we had not been in touch for decades; It’s a very strange, unpleasant and embarrassing

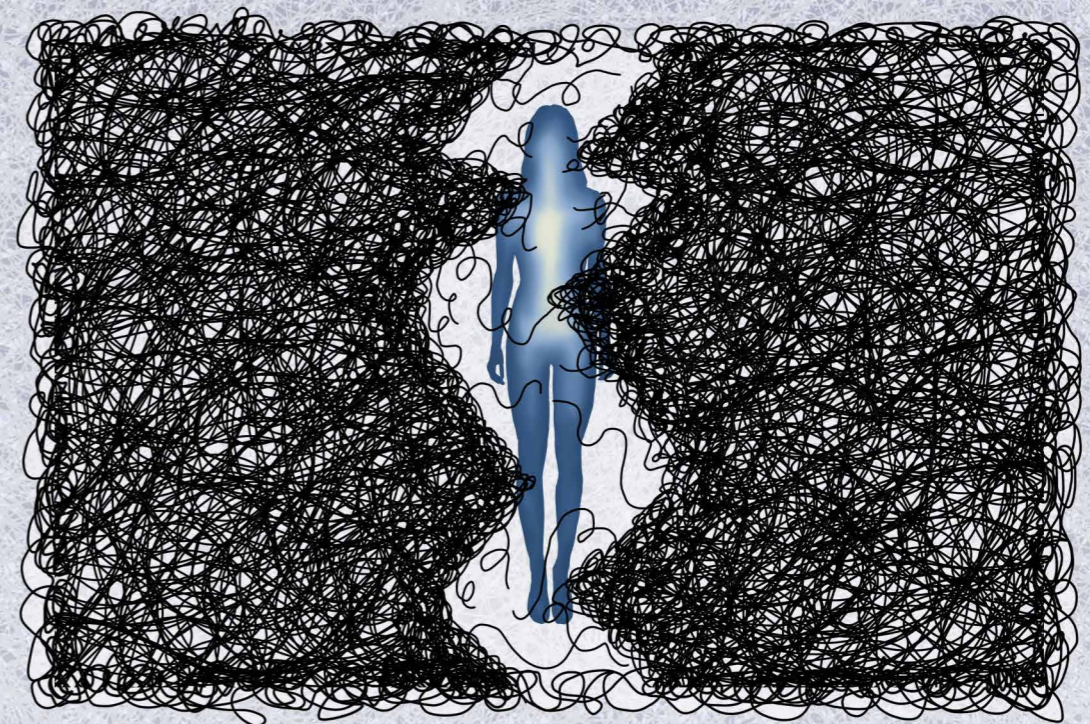
feeling. It’s not just rebuilding relationships that’s problematic by the way. Sometimes I just feel crippled, both physically and mentally. Up until a few years ago, I would live in a constant rush, wishing for a day would to last at least 48 hours. Nowadays, my legs, unaccustomed to any regular activity, won’t burn through a few hundred meters of fast-paced walking.

Having been out for almost 4 weeks, I already know that this is not just ordinary soreness, but a real deterioration of health. Besides, I can no longer act under time pressure as I used to – unused to any activity, I catch a brain overload when I have two or three things to deal with in one day. I feel dissatisfied with myself very often. At times I feel like a child in a fog. There are many things that are routine to average



people that I can't do. In terms of technology and e-news, I'm simply DISABLED. I don't know where one needs to go to sort things out either, or how these things are done... And yet in prison I was unbeatable when it came to official letters or regulations. Now I feel stupid on a regular basis, so much so that I get a GLOW OF STUPIDITY. Oh well... Let's leave this pessimism and self-flagellation behind bars. Perhaps I'm a little too critical of myself. After all, there are also matters that make me really proud of myself. I have changed what was most important and most difficult – destructive environment and life diluted with drugs. This is a huge achievement for me, and so is the fact that I've been slowly learning to turn to the right people for help when things get a little too hard for me.

Finally, since we have already broken out of the less bright side of my release, I want to draw your attention to small, simple things that often go unnoticed. I get up in the morning because I always have something to do. No one barges in to do a search, no one ruins my plans. I sit on the steps in front of the house with a coffee, basking in the sun. You have no idea how hard it is to remain inside gray walls with plexiglass in the windows on beautiful summer days... How frustrating it is that during such weather you spend two weeks waiting for your hour-long walk not to be scheduled at 8:00 am. I can bathe whenever and for as long as I want. My hair smells nice. I have access to a wash machine and an iron. No one counts my pairs of panties or makes sure that I don't accidentally have two



plates stashed. My meals consist of what I feel like eating, not what the kitchen will dish out. I eat tons of seasonal fruit, because I had waited for them with particular eagerness (there are only apples and lemons in the canteen). I go to the store whenever I want, 10 times a day if necessary. I choose where and when I go, who I want to meet and who I don't. I am free and I can decide for myself what to do with this freedom – and I think that's a pretty good start...

A



Did you know...

The World Laughter Day is celebrated on the first Sunday of May every year. The holiday was established in 1998 by Madan Kataria, the founder of the international Laughter Yoga Movement. The aim of the celebration of World Laughter Day is to demonstrate peace in the world and to build global awareness of brotherhood and friendship through laughter:) The first day of laughter was celebrated on January 11, 1998 in Mumbai (India).

According to the originator of this day, laughter is a positive and strong emotion that contains all the necessary ingredients for individuals to be able to control themselves and even change the world with a kind of domino effect. Remember that we need laughter in life just like we need oxygen, so don't forget to simply laugh ;)

Rusalka

ilustracje: Natalia Gadzinowska



