

~~NOTE~~ LOVE TO SELF

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To whomever reading this.

*If you feel connected to my stories, you know you are not alone
in this. If it helped you find what you were looking for, you did
it friend!*

*Somewhere on the road of finding what I was looking for, I
found it.*

*To my daughter Alyx, never stop being you in any different way.
Always believe the best in yourself. You will make it far in life.*

*To you, yes you. I trust our journey. One day we will meet
again.*

I will never give up on love.

Today is yesterdays tomorrow.

PROLOGUE

The inner entertainer has always lived in me. I loved being the center of attention at family gatherings, especially when I'd perform solo as all of the Spice Girls. Can you imagine my multitasking skills, even back then? I was born a leader. Five girls, five characters, all at once. Today, they'd call that split personality disorder—but I had it all under control.

My family and their friends didn't understand a thing I did; they'd clap and smile along. A bunch of middle-aged Turkish family friends of my grandparents, all waiting for Iftar during Ramadan. None of them listened to the lyrics I lip-synced anyway. Their English wasn't as strong as mine. Some of them barely knew a word. But then again, who understood the lyrics at age six? What did "I, really, really wanna zigzag ah" even mean?

My parents never judged me for wanting to be different. Even though dancing to the Spice Girls at Iftar wasn't the most traditional thing, I always found a way to do it. My mom secretly liked the Spice Girls at the time. My dad? He probably didn't know a word of English back in the '90s. I nearly failed English when he tried to help me with my homework.

These five personalities still follow me to this day. It's not that I have a split personality disorder; they're just five alter egos I use to cover different sides of myself.

The only Spice I couldn't relate to was Ginger Spice—I wasn't even allowed to dye my hair red. It's a good thing she left the group; I could focus on the remaining four.

I wanted what they had. I wanted the authority to speak up, the audacity not to care what anyone thought. I wanted their clothes, their shoes. I wanted people to love me the way they adored them. They were cool, they were colorful, they were the It girls. Everyone was talking about them. It looked so easy—singing, dancing, shouting GIRL POWER to the world.

There was a reason they needed a fifth member. Little did they know that 28 years later, I'd become one of them.

I became my own Spice Girl. The only one that mattered to me was me.

Who would have thought I'd one day create my character?

Meet the 34-year-old Spice Girl. Her superpowers are simple: she is a strong leader with multiple heartbreaks, daddy issues, body complexes, and an extreme people-pleasing syndrome.

As a very close person in my life told me, "Dilara, your writing is so easygoing," I realised that my real personality was always an open book; the way you saw me was the way I was. But under those layers of sparkles, there was an untold story that I hadn't even told myself. So I started writing down some of my stories in my notes, and as you can see, I finished a book.

This book is a love note to myself and all of you, that even if you wear your heart on your sleeve, you can become the best version of yourself. I am not saying that I am there today, but I made room on the road to find her. Myself.

CHAPTER 1

I'M DILARA, BUT YOU CAN CALL ME "DILDO"



I was one of those kids who trusted my surroundings too much. Who wouldn't? If someone gave me something, I would take it. I would see the beauty in everything. One time during Christmas, I received a gift from my grandma's best friend—a package of heavy cream, wrapped in Christmas paper. Honestly, I was so thankful. She must have had a thought behind it. I was grateful for anything I got.

One day, when I was 8 years old, we were at my childhood friend's house for dinner. A typical family gathering where all the kids would play in the room, while the parents would eat, drink, and smoke in the kitchen. The kids, who were a mix of ages, would often participate in soccer tournaments or do something else that didn't make sense. My friend's older brother and his friend were a few years older than us and had entered the age of making silly jokes. Neither I nor the other younger kids would understand, but we would play

along. They came to me with a quirky smile and said, "Dilara, we have a nickname for you." A nickname for me? How cool! They were laughing and giggling. "We have decided to call you... DILDO". Dildo? What does that even mean? But I thought it was so cool. Someone had thought about me and given me a nickname. "But, what does it mean?" They would crack up on the floor laughing and say "Dildo, ha ha ha, it means... Ehm... STRAWBERRY ICE CREAM". It was so sweet. I loved strawberry ice cream. My new nickname was Dildo—the strawberry ice cream.

The next school day, I was walking with pride because I was Dildo. No more Dilara. Dildo. Quickly, I erased my name from my school books and wrote "Dildo 2D". Nobody had noticed anything until this time. I hadn't seen anything either. When my friends' parents would pick their kids up, I would quickly go to them and introduce myself as "Hello! My name is Dilara, but everyone calls me dildo by now, so you can also call me Dildo". Imagine. Just imagine how this must have sounded for the parents.

This nickname did not last long. After a few days, the teacher, principal, and I were sitting in their office. I had no idea what it was about, but since I was also a very talented kid, it must have been a meeting of recognition. My notebook was on the table, and they looked at me, saying, "We need

you to stop calling yourself a dildo. Do you know what it means?". Of course, I knew. Hello! Have you missed the meaning of Dildo? "It means... ehm.. Strawberry ice cream". When I say the teacher looked at me with confused eyes. They looked at me with confused eyes. How were they going to explain to me what it meant? "Sweetheart, dildo doesn't mean strawberry ice cream. Dildo means... "They took a long break finding the right word. "Dildo means, loose penis".

As you might understand, I never used the word again (not saying I didn't use the actual thing later in life, but that's another story).

My new nickname became much cooler. Dillie. This time, I made that up myself.

CHAPTER 2

PLEASE JUST STOP THE PLEASING

My childhood was "quite normal." I had loving parents, and I was an only child. Spoiled, in other words. My grandparents lived down the street and often picked me up from school, providing my parents with considerable support. It was very normal for me to get a banana split after dinner—complete with the umbrella and sparklers. As I grew rounder from the ice cream, I also grew more spoiled with material things. My dad would buy me the latest Barbie dolls nearly every weekend. Win-win for me. My mom, however, didn't like it at all. We weren't exactly a wealthy family that could afford spontaneous Barbies or other toys. I would throw tantrums if I didn't get what I wanted from my mom. She took the hardest hits from me. Now, as a mother myself, I think I'm getting the karma I deserve from my own daughter. I'm definitely paying the price for my actions.

There are gaps in my memory of my teenage years. Actually, not just a few—many. To write this book, I had to open up those years and dust off boxes of memories, Pandora's boxes that I hadn't touched in ages.

I'm terrified of being disliked, of knowing that people might speak poorly of me. Writing a whole book is the ultimate test, forcing me to put myself out there—raw and exposed. But my purpose in writing is clear, and my fear of being misunderstood is less.

Looking back on my teenage years, many aspects involved me being misunderstood or wrongly accused. I was constantly explaining myself. It started when I was fifteen and has never really stopped. I became a master at people-pleasing.

One of the primary reasons people engage in people-pleasing is a lack of self-confidence. The urge to please people to be accepted or approved is a cover to present your best self to others.

At first, I thought, This is just how I am. Choosing myself first wasn't an option. It was hard to say no, difficult to stand up for myself, and challenging to go my own way.

Back to my mother, who took the most brutal blows. She was the one who saw it all. She still does. Having divorced parents and feeling like I had to "pick a parent" wasn't something they asked of me, but I felt guilty choosing comfort, where my heart felt most at home: with Mom. I wish I could make that decision now. It would have been so

much easier, and maybe my relationship with my dad would be different.

When my father remarried, I found myself moving bags from place to place, week after week—one week with Mom, the next with Dad and his new wife. I often forgot something and have to pack yet another bag. That bag-living life is still something I do today.

I had my own room at both places. One room was impeccably clean; the other, pure chaos. The sheets on one bed were always perfect, and I wouldn't leave the house without making my bed. A week later, my bed would be messy, and clothes would be scattered across the sheets. No crumbs, plates, or glasses left overnight in one room, versus cups scattered everywhere from days ago in the other. It was as though I had two different personalities: playing the perfect child in one home and being myself in the other. The only place I didn't feel the need to please was with my mom.

I'd get phone calls from my dad reminding me to be a bit more careful with things like making my bed, not leaving crumbs, or picking up my socks. Sometimes, there'd be talks about how I shouldn't walk barefoot in the house and must always wear socks. Who does that? I had to play the perfect child, tiptoeing around to avoid "feedback" on how to be a teenager. All this, to please someone who gave me nothing in

return. I couldn't be disrespectful to her; she was new to the family.

After years of tiptoeing, feeling unaccepted from one side, and always moving between places, the people-pleaser in me was born. It went so far that I would even please the pleaser's pleaser. I'd make up stories for my mom and defend the person I aimed to please, all to keep the peace. Waiting for the call to tell me I'd forgotten to make my bed used to drive me insane. And, honestly, I did go a little insane.

Taking stock of where I am today: I overdo gifts. My calendar is always filled with plans. Saying no still feels uncomfortable. I feel guilty and afraid of rejection. When I receive a compliment, I rarely say "thank you" without adding a self-deprecating joke. Men have taken advantage, leaving me standing there, confused.

Reading this, you're probably thinking, Girl, go seek some help. Confronting my feelings scared me, and I never thought people-pleasing was a real thing. Now I know it is. Now I know why I attract narcissistic people.

CHAPTER 3

THE TWITTER GUY

My last name, Kescu, means "Bird Keeper" in Turkish. I like birds. They are free in the air, and their tweeting brings peace when you're outside. But not every tweet is music to your ears.

Sometimes, life surprises you with just how mean people can be. The overthinking starts, and you become a desperado, obsessing and searching for answers. I've had moments like this, especially since I already suffer from anxiety about what people say or think about me. I'm not going to lie—I became that girl who started looking for answers in everything. But then I had to ask myself, "Have I done anything wrong?" When I realized I hadn't, I decided to write a book about it. Because no matter how ugly things got, I knew the truth.

Then, a random Twitter post appeared while I was scrolling. It was funny timing because I had just given someone my "Not Cool" card for forgetting my birthday. As I read it, I started feeling like someone had just given me a cold shower. I realized this post was about me.

"A few days ago, I received the 'Not Cool' card because I forgot someone's birthday. First of all, grow up—you're 35. Second, I really don't care; if I did, I'd have remembered. 'You forgot my birthday!' I know I did, and I don't give a fuck about your birthday."

What bothered me the most? Forget the birthday—it was that he thought I was 35! "Dude, I just turned 32, I look 26, and I act like 23. What are you talking about?" And then all the feelings started churning inside me. Not for a day, not for two. For a whole month.

We'd had something for ten years. It started with feelings and ended in friendship. On this man's birthday, I stood there, giving genuine effort. Even the card I gave him was thoughtful. That's what I do for people I care about.

I was ready for revenge. I was prepared to make a plan, something savage that would make this man feel like I had felt. Humiliated. But the last thing I expected was to realize that the easiest thing was also the hardest: rolling my eyes and letting it go. My friends kept telling me to leave it. I couldn't though, because there was a little person inside me who didn't want to.