

Salt on my lips



# Salt on my lips

*A story about silence, breaking and staying*

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## ***Foreword***

This book is not an indictment. And it is not accountability.

It is a story about what happens when you learn to be silent before you learn to choose. About how love sometimes feels like something you have to earn. About how freedom beckons, but does not always protect.

Salt on my Lips didn't start as a book. It started as memories that kept presenting themselves. Moments that get stuck in my body: a first kiss by the sea, silence at a kitchen table, a suitcase that was packed more often than unpacked, words that were not said but determined everything. I wrote this for the girl I was. For the woman I became. And for everyone who recognizes themselves in adjusting, waiting, hoping that things will change by themselves.

This story is about islands, but even more about inner landscapes. About how you can lose yourself without realizing it. And about how you can find yourself again, not all of a sudden, not perfectly, but step by step. Some chapters are light. Others hurt. Not because they are meant to shock, but because truth sometimes chafes. I didn't make anything more beautiful than it was, and nothing heavier than it felt.

If you read this and think somewhere: I know this, then this book is also a bit yours. And if you read it and think: I don't quite understand this, I hope it makes you feel something.

This is not a story about victimization. It is a story about survival, learning, and ultimately: choosing.

With salt on my lips from the sea, from tears, and from everything that has taught me to feel.



## ***Free for the first time***

For the very first time I broke the invisible umbilical cord; Even if it was only for two weeks, I escaped the constant echo of my mother's voice. A voice that constricted me like armor in a suffocating interpretation of Hindustani culture, where 'tradition' was often just a synonym for control and obedience.

When the plane cut through the clouds, I left the compelling blueprint of who she thought I should be far below me. I fled from the walls of the Netherlands, but especially away from the version of myself that I had learned to play: the girl who turned off her own light so as not to blind others.

The sun hung low above the sea, as if it wanted to hide its secrets in the water. I was seventeen, freer than I had ever been, with salt on my skin and dreams that were bigger than my fear.

Mallorca was not a carefree holiday, but a raw baptism of fire in a universe that no longer saw me as 'daughter of'. For my Tourism & Business Management course, I had chosen the specialization of tour guide for my internship assignment with only one burning goal: to seize the opportunity to leave for this island. Those two weeks of training were my golden ticket to freedom, a way to cash in on extra credits while throwing off the shackles of home.

Far away from the suffocating traditions and the iron laws of my mother's regime, I was thrown into a world where only my own efforts counted. The days were brutal; Ruled by tight discipline, exhausting schedules, and the constant pressure to meet professional expectations. But there was a liberating irony in that exhaustion: the rock-hard structure of the tour guide felt as light as a feather compared to the psychological prison of my parental home.

In the Netherlands, I was limited by what others thought of me; Here I was challenged by what I could achieve myself. My body was wrecked, my head was spinning with new impressions, but every fiber in my body was pulsating with an electrical energy. I was tired to the bone, but for the first time in my seventeen years, I no longer felt like a ghost who had to ask permission to breathe. I was finally, gloriously and painfully alive.

After a grueling day full of discipline, the evening burst open. We went out. Clubbing. Just saying that word felt like a forbidden ritual, a holy sin. My friends sometimes went to the disco and sometimes asked if I was coming along, but I always had to disappoint them, my mother never allowed me to come along, just asking her was punishable by death. In my childhood, I was not even allowed to attend a classmate's or friend's birthday. I was always invited but I always had to come up with an excuse why I couldn't go. I thought this was terrible and was very sad about it. At one point I was no longer invited, because I never went to a children's party anyway.

I was seventeen and had never crossed the threshold of a discotheque, but when I stepped into that world, everything I knew was swept away.

Inside, the air was thick with electricity and adrenaline. The music was no longer a sound, but a physical force; The bass pounded so relentlessly against my chest that my own thoughts were simply pulverized. The light was a psychotic dance of flashes on, off, on exactly on the raw beat that took control of my limbs. My body moved instinctively, freed from the iron chains of 'must'. I no longer had to think, no longer please. All I had to do was be.

My first beer tasted of bitter rebellion and liquid freedom. Then Isabelle brought my roommate a shot: sharp, burning like liquid fire in my throat, a dangerous sensation that sharpened my senses. I laughed at nothing, a liberating laugh that came from the deepest cellars of my soul. I danced without a plan, a

wild choreography of pure release, and fiddled with the world around me without knowing the rules of the game. I didn't even know that what I was doing was flirting; I felt only the unfiltered, all-consuming joy of the moment.

The music swelled until the walls themselves seemed to breathe and wave with the ecstasy of the night. Colors exploded in my field of vision, a kaleidoscope that merged with the heartbeat of the city. Without shame, without inhibitions, I let myself be carried away. My head was still, but my body had finally woken up and knew a language that I had never dared to allow myself.

In the heart of the swirling crowd I suddenly felt it: a look that cut through the music and the heat like an electric shock. Not a fleeting passing, but a glance that lingered and made time stand still. I looked up and was caught by his eyes. It was Lucas. Lucas is a nice, spontaneous dark blond boy from Brabant who also followed the training.

He stood there, a silhouette teetering on the edge of light and darkness, half-absorbed by the club's flashing shadows. He didn't smile directly with his mouth, but his eyes spoke volumes. He didn't look at me, he looked through me. In the middle of that deafening chaos, between the hundreds of moving bodies and the splintering beats, it felt like he was drawing a circle around us. In his view, the rest of the world no longer existed; There was only the raw, trembling connection between him and me. For the first time in my life, I was not looked at to be judged, but really seen for who I was.

My heart skipped a beat, a violent shock that drowned out the thumping bass of the club for a moment. He came at me with an exasperating, almost predatory calmness, no hurry, no doubt, as if he saw written in the stars that I was not going anywhere. The space between us shrank as the world around us disappeared in a haze of flashing lights.

When he finally stood right in front of me, he didn't break the silence with words. He let the music do the work. Without a

trace of discomfort, he began to move along to the beat, his eyes continuously fixed on mine. At first he kept a small, electric distance, a kind of invisible no man's land where the tension between us became almost tangible. It was a thrilling game of attraction and repulsion, a ritual dance in which we felt each other without touching each other. In those few centimeters between our bodies, the promise of something completely new vibrated, something I had never dared to feel before.

Our movements merged effortlessly, an instinctive choreography in which we found each other without words. We danced in a magnetic field; close, but without touching each other completely. Not yet. Every laugh we shared, every spin we made, felt like a small victory over the gravity of my past. We lost the rhythm in the ecstasy of the moment, only to find it immediately back in each other's eyes.

The world outside the club had ceased to exist. Hours liquefied and melted away into minutes in the sweltering heat of the dance floor. The club became a swirling mass of bodies, but my senses were only attuned to him. Every now and then there was that electrical discharge: our fingertips grazing each other, a fleeting touch of a shoulder or a hip. They were minuscule gestures, but they hit me like bombs in my stomach.

We danced all night long, trapped in a bubble that time had no hold on. It felt like the night had been created just for us, like the lights were flashing just for our meeting. I didn't know this feeling, this dizzying lightness, this unprecedented, carefree freedom.

And then, in that one second of relative silence between two thumping songs, he broke the spell. He leaned over to me, his breath warm to my ear, and asked, "Shall we go outside for a moment?"

Without a trace of doubt, without the fear that normally always ruled me, I said yes. I stepped into the cool of the night, not