

Queuing

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Asphalt is a hard surface to stand on. Insoles, they would probably help make the striding kind of softer.

There's always sawdust whirling around on running tracks. It's probably good for posture though. Which means it's only left to decide whether to suffer from asthma or scoliosis.

Here we stand, queued up victims of a week-long advertising campaign. What came first, my desire or the advertiser's idea? Was I born with my head full of dormant desires that somebody resurrects on a regular basis? It's a funny thought that I've got a body full of these kinds of slumbering things. They probably look like tadpoles. All unfinished, developing things look like tadpoles. Kind of like axolotls, known for their partial development - *neoteny*¹.

What were those bum-shaping shoes that were advertised a few years ago? They had something to do with balancing, like concave soles. While wearing them, you were, so to speak, *always on the move*. I wonder who's in charge of their marketing?

Marketing can be so obvious sometimes. It's funny, but unnecessary.

What's the word for copywriter in Finnish? We have a gazillion words for so many things, but the one word that would describe the actual inventing of words in advertising doesn't exist. I love Finnish. Every word could've truly been invented through a silly joke. It must have taken some twisting and turning. Swedes all ceremonious in the west, Russians dancing in the east, and Finns just lolling in the middle, trying their best to enjoy the dissonance of their situation.

It's 11.37 am. We've stood here for exactly 37 minutes, almost an hour. Somebody in the queue always keeps the door open. The responsibility is passed on. Some have to keep it open longer than others, even if they've queued just as long. Nothing ever comes out even. You can't ever queue for the exact amount of time as somebody else does. Except if you come as a couple, as a family, or with a group.

Here we stand. Bodies against bodies. Of course, personal space is kept with the person in front of you and behind you. A meat train, on its way to shared experiences.

I wonder when someone last ate meat with a clear conscience? The gnawing already starts when you reach for the minced meat pillow from the store shelf. People look at

¹ *Neoteny* refers to the biological retention of an organism's immature physical traits, even past adult development – this can be seen in axolotls.

you for really long, eyes kind of lingering on you. From head to toes, breasts to groin, shoulders to knees. A full-body scan.

I have to strengthen the muscles in my feet. This might even make queuing feel more comfortable. My back gets stuck when I stay put for a long time. I need to crack it right now, actually. Maybe I could lean on that person? Tap on their shoulder inquiringly and ask them to just stand still while I lean on them and turn myself 180 degrees to the left, then to the right.

I wonder if you can stand up with those shoes?

Aha, they've been "holding their spot". I do it, too. Everybody does. But when it's a queue like *this* - pretty rude. A real seagull, a free-rider. They should just suffer like the rest of us. It's not like we're shivering here for the fun of it. Rules are rules, you don't depart from them.

People really have time. I wonder if most heard about this in advance, like me, or if they joined after seeing us? I'd never join like that, it's not like I have *that* much time. And actually, I wanted to do this quickly: in and out. Flash my museum card in a jiffy, for one hundredth of a second. Swoosh, swoosh.

I wasn't the only one who had been thinking that.

Everyone is annoyed. Everyone is sweating and feels dizzy. Everyone would just like to be alone, without anyone in front or behind them, staring. Everyone is dehydrated, everyone feels puffy.

I wonder if my hair looks greasy? I should wash it less. It would save the planet and my money. Should you choose nature or yourself first? I *am* eco-friendly, though. I don't care so much for people. But I'm scared of nature, scared of bears. The father of a friend of a friend of mine got mauled by a bear, while on a jogging trail in Espoo, Finland. Couldn't you be eco-friendly, enjoy nature and forests, but without the fear? I'd just like to do some campfire grilling, listen to the familiar sounds of the loon bird, and make crepes. With crispy stray ends around the edges, just a little blackened. Carcinogens. But I love those crispy edges the best. I don't smoke and I don't drink so much; I don't eat meat either. I wonder if that's enough? I could already have cancer, a cancer of crispy edges.

It's nice to be one of the first ones to experience this. It's best to experience these things alone. I can't deal with all the analyses. People talking over each other, behaving like know-it-alls. Without a judge, no one wins. The atmosphere gets ruined by judging, and then you feel really stupid.

It's really thoughtless how in daily life, people reveal their experiences and critiques everywhere in the media. Those revelations affect your own experiences. I want to experience things all by myself first, without any expectations. And only then form an opinion. It's pretty impossible these days.

The morning after, the only place you can watch the original recorded version of the Oscars is on YLE². This is the one that hasn't been subtitled yet, since everyone else shares the news of what happened on their own channels. They share that *I watched it, I held on to the end*. And so I'll just ruin your experience, and tell you who won the awards, who had the best lines, and whose dress revealed too much, if it's even possible to reveal too much these days.

And when it comes to this - surely overrated - sensation of the year, I have already managed to read a litany of emotions and emotional surges that are evoked by all the different artworks. What I expect to see now, at least, is a nirvana. One that can be reached without pushing too hard.

I wouldn't want to pay for pushing hard. Even giving birth is relatively free - about 200 euros for the hospital costs. That's basically free. But not everyone can even afford that. Do they give birth in the sauna then? Back in the day, they used to give birth in the sauna. Back in the day, they also used to die in the sauna.

The doors open. The first ones can go inside and warm up. Lucky ones. Out of sight, out of mind.

What is that person looking at? Do they really not understand why we are queuing up here. Alright, ask: ask what we're queuing for. Fire away, I'm happy to answer.

Damn, what if this turns out to be some mediocre shit? What am I doing here queued up? But I can't leave now. I'd be a real quitter. Finns don't give up, no fucking way. Inner strength runs in our blood. I wonder if you could draw the inner strength out? Cupping therapy removes dirty blood, unwanted things.

It's really noisy here, with both natural and unnatural sounds. I wonder what kind of hearing loss one gets in the city?

What, are the seagulls already moving back in? Then again, I suppose summer is only a couple of months away.

It's funny how in winter you forget how summer feels on the skin. Or that actually you hardly feel it at all. This winter has lasted longer than I ever would have thought. Longer than I ever would have wanted.

Last summer was fantastic, absolutely fantastic.

Oops, I wonder if they noticed that. Okay, yeah they did. Why can't you just turn around and say that *it's okay*. Why do you have to turn sideways like that, without even looking towards me. Turning partly, wrinkling up your nose a bit and then turning back again to face the queue. My stepping on your heels shouldn't feel like anything, especially when you're wearing those kinds of boots.

² * Finland's national public broadcasting company

If it were summer, it probably would have hurt - badly.

Whatever. What a small-minded character, with an attitude problem too. I look past them, all the way over to the next person's fluffy woolen duffle coat. I don't even see them wrinkling up their nose.

I wonder what people get from taking offence? Everyone has some kind of trauma. Therapy can deal with the emotional locks and schemas that free you from your own shame. You're allowed to feel your feelings, and you need to feel your feelings. You can also track them. I don't want to become completely mechanised.

I wonder if that nose-wrinkler was taught to protest everything from when they were young? That when you face injustice, you have to make a big thing out of it. A quiet kind of big thing that humiliates the other person in addition to the shame they're already feeling. I don't get it. Why do you have to disgrace other people like that?

I don't look at them. It's totally *okay* and *normal* to ignore them. Or is it this typical Finnish brooding after all? That when you don't pay attention and just look elsewhere, you suddenly become a taciturn Finn?

Should you look at beggars in the eye and apologise for not having money? Everyone has money, though, but this just requires them having to face reality. It's true no one carries cash anymore, but there are ATMs everywhere. It's not an excuse. I wonder how long that person will sit there on their knees. I wouldn't want to look at them in the eye. Because if you don't give money after that, you're just utter human garbage.

I'm not, am I?

I'm just afraid that the money will end up in some human trafficking cartel. That the half-paralysed person who has ambled over here to the wonderland of Sokos department shops and R-kioski stores won't get a single cent. Where they spend the cold winter?

I've never bought an issue of the *Iso Numero* street paper. I should. It's a lot of money though, 10 euros. The vendors aren't allowed to peddle, they just have to stand and hold the paper in their hands. I wonder what kind of a vendor I'd be?

In Finland too, these days, you can see those beggars who hold a message in block letters written on a piece of cardboard: "*I'm blind and have five children, we need money for food and medicine, God bless you.*" You used to only see them abroad. There, they're welcome to do their begging rounds. Here, we're shitting ourselves, wondering what to do about the situation.

In Indonesian, *kerja* means work³.

³ The word for "beg" in Finnish is "kerjätä", so it is very close to the Indonesian "kerja" (to work). There is a word play here, between the original Finnish version and the Indonesian word, that intentionally conflates the relationship between 'working' and 'begging'.

Should we put signs on doors saying *no begging*? But then again, life is nothing but begging. Begging for attention, money, work, love, sex. Nothing is handed out for free. Or is it? Is there *anything completely selfless*? It's somehow so hard to believe that there is.

How cynical I've become. Five years ago, I didn't think like this. Does aging actually just mean that our openness and naivety shrink, get shrunk? Shrinks get us shrunk. So that at some point, you don't really even want to understand. It's too hard. All's well when I just keep calm and carry on, right? Right?!

My toes are freezing. I should've worn winter boots. But how you get dazzled by the sun! As soon as the sun shines, you ditch those sweaters, go shorts-shopping, and eat ice cream in the frost.

It will stay like this way past mid-June. Same thing every year. The same weather forecast, the same weather.

You'd think people get tired of talking about the same things all year round. At least I'm tired as hell. But still these thoughts take over my mind. The more I think about them, the harder it is to get rid of them. There they are again. Earworms, all of them.

Sometimes I'd just like to blow up my head. Then I could start from scratch, gathering data and information, emotions and routines.

I wonder if the nose-wrinkler is still thinking about how I stepped on their heel?

Alkuperäinen teksti osoitteessa: <https://nuorivoima.fi/lue/novelli/jonotus>