



Splash of a Drop

Splash of a Drop is a background, a scene, a setting
—consisting of a text with the same name, a subtle
scent, a light setting, a playlist and a rose-infused
drink conceived by Gina Merz for Rakete Festival
at Tanzquartier Wien on May 23, 2025.

Every morning she wakes up at 7am, never a minute later. This was the only thing she could rely on. In bed she twists her body around until she can no longer stand it, this is when she makes her unending way to the bathroom on the other side of the hall. It takes her 33 steps to arrive, counting in her head, she sits down on the toilet and pees for 18 seconds, then she brushes her teeth, scrapes her tongue, combs her short black hair until it's extra-shiny and leaves towards her closet. Today marks the day where she searches for her pale blue slip dress in the boxes with her summer clothes which she stored away on top of her closet for the unending winter months. She finds it. She puts it on. Back in her room she decides which book to take to read during her lunch break. While scanning the shelf words fly towards her taking hold of her imagination and forming a list of impressions and commands:

Ornament
Seduction
Baroque
Insecurity
Self-Shattering
Grave
Liquidity
Gesammelte Werke
Aufstand
Zeichen
Work
Rigidity
And

She grabs *Seduction* and throws it into her bag. Almost out the door, she smells something funny, looks back into the 33 meter long hallway that stretches through her apartment and sees the mess. She must have stepped over the unending containers of paint and brushes on her way to the bathroom earlier. Did she leave them there? Is it possible? Has she been sleepwalk-painting her hallway again? This hadn't happened for at least three months. She examines her progress: She must have completed around three roses of her tromp-l'œil garden. Something to take care of later, she thinks and leaves the house.

Usually staff are only allowed to enter through the back door located in the underground parking garage. Whenever she feels the need for a treat, she enters her workplace through the main entrance, wearing a scarf and big sunglasses for her boss not to immediately recognize her. She strolls around. She is exhilarated by the presence of the chic women who populate the department store in the early hours, in which everyone but them has to work. She watches them choose diamond necklaces for their daughter's sweet sixteenth or a bikini for the upcoming family summer holiday. She fantasizes about becoming one of these daughters, happily obeying her mother's abundant wishes to embellish her offspring. The feeling of jealousy and the wish for possession is familiar to her. Her gaze wanders towards the vitrines filled with glitter and gold. *Pure appearances, they have the irony of too much reality.* Did she read this somewhere?

Inside the elevator she presses 3–Household goods and stares out through the still open doors into the sparkling landscape. Her eyes always seek out the same poster, squinting to see the slogan clearly she reads: *Because innocence is sexier than you think.* The door closes. Arriving on the third floor, she clocks in. Work starts when she gets paid. On the third floor she does not feel passion. She is not made for the third floor. What does she know about baking dishes and pans and knives anyways? Sometimes, when a customer approaches her counter she has this urge to duck and to crawl all the way to the first floor.

The workday starts quiet. Her main task before weekends is wrapping gifts and writing gift cards to strangers. She is good at packing the presents really tight, with geometric precision. She invented a closed system of rules and mathematical calculations for the process of decoration. Mainly to entertain herself. Sometimes she uses the trick of placing a very small object in a large box. She wonders if the recipient thinks it's funny, or disappointing. What's important is: she is in charge.

*To my dear wife, who is the best cook in the world.
To the best mother, thank you for always feeding me.
To my sweet girlfriend, who only deserves the best.
To my angel sister, thank you for always being there
for me.*

Other people's lunch breaks are the busiest moments of the day at the department store. Returns followed by consultations, followed by extensive lies about the product's benefits and necessity. She begins to sweat. She does not dare lift her arm while pointing out products to customers. She begins to smell. Her odour is palpable. Occasionally she lifts her arm in order to smell herself. She likes it, but she knows she is not supposed to.

She stares at the big clock in the corner of the room for exactly 12 minutes, counting the seconds, following the hand. At 2pm she runs down the stairs, too desperate to wait for the elevator, sprints towards the perfume counter, and... there it is, promising relief: The light reflects off its surface in a pale blue color. Its shimmer is recognized as nothing but its own. The gravity, the weight—how it falls into the hand. Who wouldn't want to own it? She turns around, no one in sight. A silent whisper: *I dare you...*

She holds the precious flacon, almost dropping it, her hands nervously shaking. It's so heavy. She puts it back, hardly managing, and runs out. Resting her hands on her knees, round back, hasting, gasping for air. She couldn't do it. A power bigger than her forbid her from going through with it. Like gravity. Her afternoon shift continues harshly, no time to recover or analyze. It's all a haze. She is dizzy.

She finishes work at 5pm, puts her headphones on and leaves through the staff entrance into the parking garage and out onto the street, still smelling herself. She walks 333 steps, counting in her head, and enters the local drug store, on a mission. She circles the aisle with perfumes—once, twice, three times—before she grabs a heart shaped flacon exposed as tester and puts it in her bag, right next to an uneaten apple and unread *Seduction*.

It's funny, because didn't she just think to herself: *never would I steal a drug store perfume*. It was a test. And she had passed.

Coming home, she hesitantly places the stolen drug store perfume bottle alongside her collection of high-class flacons, most of which she stole from duty-free airport shops or from the department store where she works—mainly for that purpose. She consciously displayed them in a glass vitrine in her living room. She was usually interested in the highly ornamental ones made from special glass and designed by special people. It was never really about the liquid quality and the smell of perfume for her, but the materialization of it as a product, a body, a bottle. She considers this her proudest collection:

Egoïste Platinum
Manifesto L'Elixir
La vie est belle
Intimate
Safari
Opium
Magie Noir
Million Gold
Hypnotic Poison
Boss Ma Vie
Libre Intense
Nomade
Divine
All about Eve
Eternity for men

She's still got it, but it didn't feel as good anymore. Something changed today and it's unclear to her what exactly. Why was she unable to throw it into her bag like all the others? Why did it resist her? How is it different from the others? She wonders how it smells, how it feels on her skin. It is unusual for her to desire the fluid form of the object. She is generally suspicious of the concept of liquidity. Up until now she was more interested in putting an object in a vitrine to look at its beauty and form.

Exhausted, she eats a whole fish on a bed of rice and goes to bed. That night she tosses and turns, the excitement is still in her bones. She finally drifts off into a dream:

She is standing in a dance rehearsal room, or a theatre backstage. She is blinded by the spotlights. She almost can't see. It is noisy and busy around her. She gets pushed by some unrecognizable figures that run around her, which makes her finally lose all sense of direction. After she finds some orientation, she sees that she is in the middle of a beauty pageant. She sees the contours of the candidates go out on a stage, pose in front of a jury, smiling, spinning. She rubs her eyes, focuses on the contestants, until she slowly realizes they are not exactly human—but perfume flacons. She recognizes the ones from her vitrine. She looks down at her feet and form: She transformed into the perfume bottle she tried to steal today at work. A bell is ringing, signaling for the next contestant to go on stage. They call her name. It is her turn. The bell continues to ring, turning into her alarm clock. She wakes up as the dream liquidizes into memory.

In the morning, whilst having her third coffee, standing in front of the vitrine in her living room, she schemes for the day to come. She has a plan. At work she tries to act as casual as possible, without raising suspicion. At 2pm sharp she casually walks towards the perfume counter on the first floor. She approaches the light blue flacon, picks it up slowly: Spray on the left wrist, right wrist, centre of the neck. Try me! The smell captures her. She watches a slow drop running down her wrist, then vanish. It smells of her dreams.

She reads the description of the scent on an advertisement poster: *A meeting of two strangers brought together by strong feelings and a simple desire to connect. A memory of a past night, an intimate story, a breath on the neck of two beings who are one. A brief moment... This fragrant interpretation is reminiscent of the blue of ink applied to the correspondence of two lovers... An alliance between the freshness of rose essence with a background of pepper, surrounded by an inky accord. A note that gives this eau de perfume a magnetic form.*

Getting home from work that night she starts cleaning up the hallway, getting rid of the other days mess: While picking up a crusted brush, she steps on a pink rose leaf. She picks it up and rubs it under her nose. In her head she tries to describe the smell, but it resists the translation into language. It disrupts her symbolic order. All she knows is: This smells like the color blue. Then, as if in trance, she squeezes the skin on her wrist where she sprayed the perfume, almost like popping a pimple, and a blue liquid peels out and falls into a bag of pigments that she must have used for mixing the colors for her tromp-l'œil garden. She starts painting.

The hallway begins to smell and move. It takes her there. She walks into the garden, touches the roses, admires the pepper, inhales the air. She runs and jumps barefoot. It seems to her as if this is the first time she smells anything. The fountain in the middle of the garden seems promising, she walks in and starts playing with the bluish water. It runs through her fingers like ink. She sees her face in the reflection of the surface. A stranger, revealing herself through her own image. Pure beauty. Pure object. Pure liquid. Pure connection. She loves what she sees.

She turns to the camera and says in a sexy voice:

Hi, my name is Mystère.

Mystère Intense.

The perfume that can't be owned, just kept.

