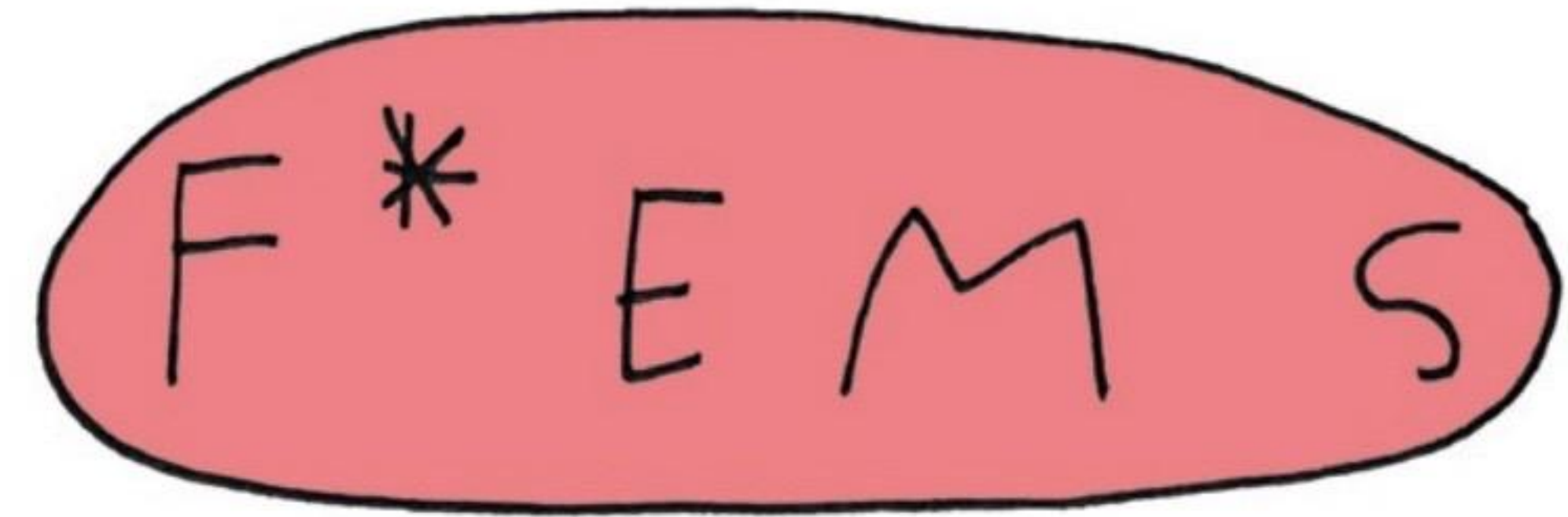




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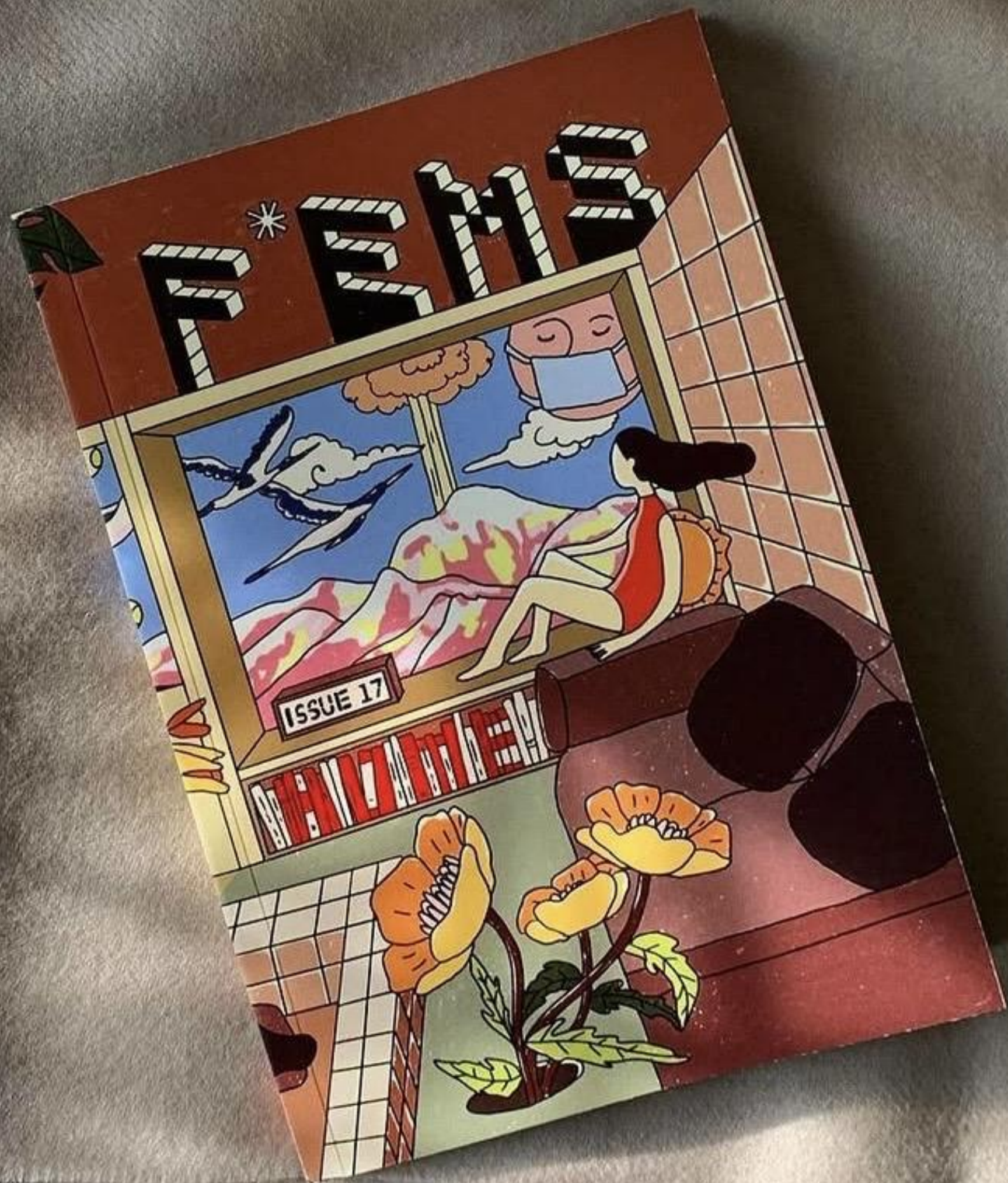
FEMALES* FOR EQUALITY MAKING STUFF

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We acknowledge the traditional owners of the land, the Kulin Nation
& pay our respects to elders past, present & emerging

* THIS INCLUDES FEMMES, AGENDER, NON-BINARY, WOMAN-ALIGNED,
FEMALE-PRESENTING OR -READ, TRANS, GENDER NON-CONFORMING
PEOPLE & A RANGE OF GENDERS IN BETWEEN. ♡



NATALIA LOMAIA

Georgia

Calendar, Medicine and some Bedtime Stories

While trying to clear the already sold huge family house in Tbilisi where I lived for almost 25 years (which has also emptied of people in the last 3 years because of my grandmother passing away, my grandfather moving out and me and my sister moving to Europe for studies) and going through tons and tons of old stuff and clutter, sitting on the floor, my sister, from the mountain of the mess, handed over to me an old calendar, dated year 2000.

It was stained and very dusty. The main photo on it, with the horrible quality print, was of me and my sister in childhood, awkwardly set together on a bench in the only park in my tiny hometown, by a photographer or most likely our mother - holding a camera like it was a gift from aliens or a toy from the future. We looked funny and very uncomfortable - I was obviously forced to hug her and smile in addition. In both of our faces, you can read how desperately we wanted the shooting to end so that we could move freely again.

That was my grandmother's calendar - dates edited and rewritten, full of her handwritten notes and appointments. Turned out, she made those calendars with the up to date photos of us every single year and every year she hung the calendar on the wall in the kitchen. I never really noticed it.

So, I was sitting on the floor of my home and in a town where I grew up, feeling as much ambivalence towards it as you can possibly stuff in a person - looking at the ridiculous calendar with blurry print with my stupid face on it and thinking about my grandmother, without who I do not remember a second of childhood, in whose bed I slept all the nights I had scary dreams (which happened quite often) and remembering how endlessly welcoming and comforting she was every single time. How sweet she was, with warm hands, fluffy cheeks, curly short hair and so unbelievably kind and unlike me, entirely empty of anger, who called me by my name in such a loving, sweet way every single time, and whose death I heard about so unexpectedly when I was already in emigration and whose funeral I did not - or maybe could not - attend.

She passed in late September and in that summer I decided not to fly home during holidays, mainly because of worsened depression. I answered her calls very rarely throughout that period. Of course, I could not have known or imagined that out of nowhere, just like that, someone you love can die. You always imagine knowing in advance. At least days before. But of course, life does not work that way - we do not receive short notices for tragedies.

My uncle, her son, died in a car accident when he was just 21. My grandparents somehow managed to help him emigrate and save him and his youth from the draining horrors of civil war and poverty that was booming in my country. They hoped for a better life for him. I was born just months before his death. He had bought tons of toys but never lived to gift them to me. My grandmother used to call me "a medicine" after his death.



She would always repeat how my birth gave meaning to her life during grief and how I was like a magical cure to her, how I helped her recover. She would lie beside me at night and tell me all the stories about my uncle, about his brave deeds and how kind he was to other people. She would also read me stories before sleep, from many different books, but after having listened to tons of tales, for some reason, I fell in love with Korney Chukovsky's incredibly creepy and scary fairytale "Barmaley" and made her read it to me over and over again, sometimes 3-4 times in a row. And she would not get annoyed or bored. She would read and read, before I got tired of listening and finally fell asleep.

She called me "a medicine". And I did not even manage to be there when she was scared, dying - to make her feel safe and loved and soothed - like she somehow managed to make me feel all my life.

It's such a lonely feeling, to realize that someone who loved you hugely, all your life, in such a crazy, almost comical, bizarre way, unconditionally - who loved you enough to put your stupid face on the calendar every single year and be happy just by looking at it, is gone. For good.

How many people can you really have in life, who can love you in such an absurd, such a gigantic, unimaginable, ridiculous way? In how many people's eyes can you be so flawless and for how many, just seeing you, opening a door for you when you ring a bell - can bring so much joy and happiness?!

Since moving to Berlin, I moved 5 times, 5 different districts, 5 different apartments. None of them felt like home. I never felt even the slightest attachment to these spaces, even the tiniest regret when packing.

I may feel home someday, somewhere. I may find a space that makes me feel safe and cozy, or I may find a person with whom every space, every four walls - hotel rooms, rented apartments or sleeping capsules, will feel like home. In fact, I may find both. But I know, until that calendar with my stupid face on it was "alive" through my grandmother, until it hung on the wall and was updated every single year, until it was taken care of, even if I never noticed it, I had a real home, where - of course, I could never get back to physically, but which, partly, somehow I carry around with me, which stayed with me.

Still, after people who love you in this way die, you start to feel not just lonely, but like something warm and comfortable has been drained out of you - you feel exposed, unprotected - from the world and also from your own death. Or maybe, from your own mortality. What more can a home be? Home is when you are completely protected from the notion of your own mortality by someone who loves you gigantically.