

# **Letters to my solitary hiking sisters\***

## **On hiking & feminism**

### Letter Nr. 1

*Testing the „alone but together“ hiking concept*

*for the first time in September 2025*

*(from Mia)*



as I write a letter to “you”, the first thing to clarify is, who are “you”, solitary hiking sister\*?  
As I write a letter who am I supposing to “answer” me?

First, “you” are for me the two solitary hiking sisters\*, who hiked with me five days “alone but together” on the trail of this “feminist solitary hiking project” in September 2025.

Second, “you” are all the future solitary hiking sisters\* who will one day hike on this DIY-trail.

From the first ones, I know already that I will get an “answer”. And maybe some of the future ones will also get curious to join this letter idea inspired by the trail in combination with the first three letters.

Inconcrete recipients would be those, who are interested to get a deeper insight of what a “solitary feminist hiking project” could look like and what it has to do with an “alone but together” hiking concept. For them this could be an invitation letter to join one day. An invitation to make maybe through this project the first solitary hiking experience. Or if you are already an experienced solitary hiking sister\*, but you are curious about a feminist solitary hiking trail community, welcome to join too!

The second thing to clarify is “why” am I writing a letter to you, solitary hiking sister\*?

The base of this project is an about 5-day long DIY-trail near Helsinki. “Do-It-Yourself”- trail, because I created and described it in a trailguide-booklet by myself. Each hiking day has its own topic. They deal with the obstacles Flinta\* experience when it’s about “hiking alone” as well as the wide spectrum of hiking as a joyful and empowering feminist practice



I filled these chapters with what I found in my research and my own experience. The idea of the project is to encourage to go hiking alone, but on the other hand it should offer a space to connect with others and share thoughts and experiences on these topics. One option to do so could be group workshops before and after the solitary “alone but together”-hikes.

As a second option I thought of providing the possibility to collect different voices on the project website. That also those can share their experiences and ideas, who just hiked the trail alone without taking part in a group workshop. But as writing is also an essential part of the whole project, I caught fire for the idea of collecting these different experiences as letters instead on website columns.

A letter template gives all the letters a common structure, asking questions on the trail experience and on own thoughts about the connected topics. Still the letter concept gives the writers much more freedom in answering these questions through expressing thoughts in a more creative way of writing, than listing

<sup>1</sup> I use the gender-star (\*) to refer to an understanding of a variety of gender identities. Sometimes I use Flinta\* (FemaleLesbianInterNon-binaryTransAgender\*). Later in the text I will add some more thoughts about what is for me the “us” to what the gender star \* refers.

points in different categories of the website. For sure, it will take more time. For sure, it will bring much more joy? It means going back to the hiking memories, revising the own notes from the hiking diary and the results of the reflection template/workshop after the hike.

I couldn't have been happier when those first solitary hiking sisters\* immediately understood and felt the letter-concept also in the "alone but together" context. If the idea works out, they also will get in the future letters from other solitary hiking sisters\* who hiked the trail after them and also have read their letters. I would collect the letters on the project homepage ([www.riottrails.com](http://www.riottrails.com)) and inform the former solitary hiking sisters\* via mail, when a new letter arrives - or send the letter even per post! And of course, also other people are invited to read these different experiences and thoughts framed by the trail and letter-template structure.

The last thing to clarify is what I want to tell you in exactly this letter, solitary hiking sister\*?

First, I hesitated and thought you might have already read enough of my thoughts as these are describing the trail with the surrounding topics on the 80 pages of the trail guide. But this letter will be a bit different. Still, it will contain some trail descriptions, especially of places, so that when you hike/hiked the trail, you can recognize the storyline spots and connect them with your memory.

The letter tells about the hike in September 2025, when I tested the trail the first time with two other solitary hiking sisters\*. I tested it five times before alone.

I knew that they will hike this trail for the first time, they will see all things on the way for the first time. Sleep for the first time outside alone. Follow the first time a GPS-track on a not marked DIY-hiking trail. My first times were already some time ago.

But on the hike in September 2025, I was part of their first times in such an intensive way, although we hiked alone. It felt like this time I was hiking the trail 3 times at once. I also hiked their experience in my mind.

And their first times were linked to my first time experiences I had on these five days:

- It was the first-time other persons were testing the trail I built up & my trail description.
- The first-time testing how solitary hiking in a group will work out (alone but together)
- The first-time testing how reflecting together on fear of sleeping outside alone before the hike and supporting each other while hiking from distance could help to deal with that fear
- The first-time testing, if the connection of the "extra topics" (alone, but together, through walking, through writing, towards body-liberation) with the trail chapters could also bring some kind of reflection and inspiration for other people while hiking

*It felt like my most intense "first time" hiking experience.  
It can't happen in that way again - it feels so worth it writing a letter about it.*

This all also means that this letter will be a bit differing from the template letter structure suggestion I gave to the other hikers. And as it is just a suggestion, I'm curious to read, how they will adapt it for themselves throughout the writing process.

### How was the hiking preparation?

*My preparation started basically already in September 2022, I just had moved away from Germany, had hiked my first long distance trail through Latvia and Estonia, what also meant hiking the first time alone and began to study to become a nature guide in Rovaniemi. As I worked in my former profession as social worker mainly with women\* and experiencing the obstacles of hiking alone as woman\* as well as the benefits, I wanted to combine **hiking & feminism**. I moved to Helsinki and throughout the years of the nature-guide studies it became more clearly to me how essential the **solitary hiking part** is for me. As well as **hiking to nearby nature**, just creating my own trails, out of my own door. Exploring the possibilities of **hiking as a daily practice**. I moved out of the city and hiked in October 2024 for the first time this trail, discovering my surroundings, and started developing and documenting it through several hikes in the coming months. The trail consists of off-trail parts, forest paths, dirt roads and streets. It combines a variety of nature-environments from swamps, old forests, lakes, rivers, the sea-side and hills, and not forgetting some cultural landscapes due to the valley of the small City Siuntio. I wrote this trailguide about it and worked on the idea, how “solitary hiking” could be shared in practice with other women\*.*

*The two participants were from Germany. They didn't know each other before. Both never slept before in a tent alone. I shared the packing list and gear-renting list with them in advance, and they came to Finland a few days before the hike. We went through the trail in theory, prepared emotionally on hiking alone and took the time to get familiar with the gear they were renting, sharing and testing the essential hiking skills in practice. And of course, we spoke about how to do the “alone but together” concept. The rough plan was to hike the first half on the first day together and then split. We were connected through a chat-group and planned to share there always in the evening a picture and description of our tent spot as well as the location of it in a terrain map app. In the morning an update on how the night was and when we are about to continue our hike. Although I built some alternative routes and sleeping spots some kilometers away from each other in the trail, for this first-time testing, we decided to stick to the same route, to also test how we can find our own spots in the same sleeping spot area and how often we would meet by accident.*

### From what perspective do I write now?

*It's April 2026, over a half year after the hike. I had to count it twice. Last autumn I thought that now I will have worked over the trailguide and will plan the next workshops for the spring/summer season. Things came differently as life brought some unexpected challenges. In the end there was no time to continue working on this hiking project and planning concrete workshops in advance is still not possible for this year. I will continue working on the trailguide and maybe later during the year ask for single test-hikers, who would like to test the trail & trailguide without me; alone or maybe as a “alone but together-tandem”. Or feel free to just ask me directly, if this could be something for you this year :)*


*Writing this letter means for me manifesting that this is what I want to do. It was one of the most meaningful experiences in my life so far. (Edit May26: There will workshops & hikes this year!)*

## Back to September 2025

*The day before the hike, we went to bed at 02:00. The weather forecast for the next days promised unlikely warm weather, up to 20°C on the days, the nights about 15°C, rain maybe only on the last day. Sunrise was about 06:30 and sunset around 20:00.*

*I was nervous. Both will have their first nights alone in a tent and I will finally know how another person experiences the trail I planned.*

### Day 1 Alone ~17km



*It was a warm morning when we started, and a foggy one. The fog was so thick that the sun wasn't able to shine through. The moisture made all the spider webs visible. There were maybe as many spider webs as blueberry shrubs on the forest ground between the trees. After 4 kilometers we left the street and car traffic behind and entered the Meiko nature reserve area. For the next 2 km we followed a small forest path, what was surrounded by lots of different mushrooms, what made especially one member of our group pretty excited. Then we reached the little nameless swamp pond. The forest path makes me already forget, that city life is not far away. But arriving at the swamp pond knowing that behind there is the open swamp area and feeling the silence of the swamp nature makes me feel like entering another world.*

*Still there was no sun and the swamp was covered in fog, what caused a picturesque atmosphere. We left our backpacks near the swamp pond, took off our hiking boots and tested walking on the swamp barefoot. As both had never walked before on swamp ground, I showed them where it is safe to step on and where you have to be more careful. Due to the warm weather, it was still possible to walk barefoot or with neoprene socks through the swamp, soon this would be only possible with rubber boots. I made my first steps on swamp ground in the late summer when living in Rovaniemi 2022. I was immediately fascinated. After moving to Helsinki, I visited in autumn 2023 the first time this swamp area, and after over 20 more visits, I was now witnessing that moment of "first swamp steps fascination" of the two others. So far, I also haven't shared too many swamp moments with other people. Swamps had become something what I explored alone on my own and became an important environment of silence and solitude for me. As well as of joy and curious exploration. Sharing the moment with the others felt important. But I think I could only enjoy this group swamp experience, because I knew, some moments later, both will be on their own. Both will have the opportunity to enjoy the colors of the peat moss and the intense sensory experience of walking step by step over the peat moss field alone. The following part will be crossing the open swamp area. You also walk a forest path in your own pretty individual way, but somehow the route is given before. Crossing an open swamp area offers a direction but you have to decide every step on your own. Going in some kind of zigzag finding the peat moss parts what carries you or following what attracts your attention. I think you have to do that in your own rhythm.*

*We took our backpacks and continued on swamp ground following a small creek towards the open swamp area. The plan was to cross the first half together and then take a short break on an island in the middle of the swamp, from where on we would separate and start hiking alone. While our walking pace*

*was pretty similar on the forest path before (beside the little breaks one of us caused by picturing all the different mushrooms), moving on the swamp we all had pretty different ways of moving.*

*We arrived at about 12:15 at the swamp island.*

*At 13:15 the first one left hiking on alone.*

*At 13:35 the other one.*

*And I stayed alone on the island and tried to process what was happening.*

*After being now intensely in this “guiding role”, it felt difficult to let them go alone, although this was exactly the point of the whole thing. The more I let go, the more they can experience “hiking alone” and internalize that they can do it alone. Feel this empowerment.*

*14:18 The sun made it through the fog, and the sky was now almost blue. The colors and atmosphere of the swamp changed immediately. I wondered where the others are now, seeing the sun coming through. Maybe already at the lake Meiko.*

*14:45 I finished writing the feelings from the day so far in my diary and decided to move slowly onwards. I really needed to be alone to write, I couldn't even write when we were only two and the other one was also writing her last thoughts before she left hiking alone.*

*A quote from Sara Maitland from her book “A book of silence” came to my mind*

*“Virginia Woolf famously taught us that every women writer needs a room of her own. She didn't know the half of it, in my opinion, I need a moor of my own” (Maitland 2008, p.1).*

*Further in the book she writes about the connection of solitude & silence, wondering “what came first the freedom of solitude or the energy of silence” (p. 16). Although you are silent in the company of another person, she experiences that being aware of the other person breaks the silence. When writing these lines now in April 2026 another quote from Maitland comes to my mind “Nonetheless I began to recognize that silence and simplicity do have a connection” (p. 262). For me hiking & simplicity have a strong connection, too. I will come back to that, when writing about day 3. Day 3 is linked to the topic “walking” and the question what hiking means and how hiking could be a daily practice.*

*Here you can see how the topics “alone - but together - through walking - through writing - towards body-liberation”, are all connected somehow together, sometimes it's difficult to separate them into the different chapters. In the trail-guide book I started every chapter with quotes I found inspiring regarding these topics. Sometimes even the quotes fit into more chapters. As I already indicated faintly how (hiking) “alone” is linked to “writing” and to the chapter “walking”, to close that circle, I want to share two other quotes, what connect the alone chapter with the “body-liberation” chapter:*

*“The way women feel about their bodies is also dedicated by the patriarchy, as women are taught to see themselves primarily as objects for men. This is why Cixous emphasizes how important it is for women to use their bodies unashamedly as a source of inspiration and strength. [...] She also swore on the power of being alone, as it allows women the differentness, to achieve that.” (Diehl 2023, p. 43)*

*The quote is from Sarah Diehl, who wrote a book called “The freedom of being alone. An encouragement.” She shows for example how women\* were throughout history not allowed to be alone, a freedom what men had for themselves and what impact this form of gender inequality still has today on women\*. How empowering it can be, to also reclaim that freedom of solitude for us.*

*The second quote opens up the reflection who is the “us” when I talk about women\* or Flinta\* regarding to this hiking project and has for me a strong connection to being alone & “body-liberation”.*

*“Dreams.  
In a forest  
With snow  
Down a path  
I ask.  
If a person is alone in a forest  
Do they have a gender?” (Mina Tolu)*

*Who is the “us” brings me also to saying some words about the second chapter “but together”.*

*The “us” are for me those, who don’t experience the reality of cis-men hiking. The reality of “just hiking”, without having to deal with for example the fear of gender-based violence, growing up as a woman\*, growing up as not being treated from society as a cis-men. Regarding the individual life experience, this can be a reason to not be able to go hiking alone at all. Or although you go hiking alone, still this gendered fear can have an impact on how to choose sleeping spots or cause feelings of anger because dealing with that kind of fear takes extra energy and can take away the joy of hiking for some moments. Although I might have soon over 200 nights in a tent alone, I still feel sometimes fear. It helped me a lot, when I read from other solitary Flinta\* hikers, who hiked thousands of kilometers alone, that they also still struggle with this impact on their hiking passion. It enables us to speak openly about that fear and share what small tricks can help in these situations, who might happen also to the experienced hikers. To not blame ourselves as individuals for feeling that fear sometimes. When we prepared together for that hike, I got the feedback that it already helped, that I talked openly about my fear experience and how I deal with it. This shared understanding, support and solidarity you can only enable through Flinta\* hiking workshops.*

*This is the one part of “but together”, the other one is the shared joy and connection, you can feel on many levels with other Flinta\* hikers, although you hike alone.*

*14:52 I said the “Breathe” poem from Becky Hemsley out loud and continued. It’s the only poem I know by heart. I bumped in it in winter 2024 and took it with me when I stayed two nights under my tarp at the same place. Maybe because it has something to do with the empowerment, calmness and freedom I feel, when I’m alone in nature. I started to say it out loud to myself continuously while hiking from that winter night on.*

*As I left 1,5 h later than the others, I decided to take the short-cut and not surround the lake Meiko in the west, but to go east. I thought that I would like to arrive earlier at the sleeping spot area and take my*

*time to explore the place around the small forest pond a bit more. As until now I was there only shortly for staying the night.*

*At 16:45 I decided to take a break at the seashore of the lake Meiko. I found a cozy place, a little corner in a bay, where soft flat rocks glide into the lake. The rocks were warm from the sun and perfect to sit or even lay on. In this moment I regretted, that I didn't took a small towel with me for swimming, but dipping my feet in the lake water while sitting, felt also pretty good. I was sitting somewhere on the trail-part of the lake route called "Kuikankierros" – "round of the black-throated diver". I could see a small group of the black-throated diver on the lake in front of me. Their far-carrying and haunting call reached for sure the whole lake area. It's one of my favorite summer noises. Maybe the others are also starrng now on the lake in this moment? Following how the black-throated divers vanish suddenly under the water-surface and appear some time later in another corner of the lake. Leaving the swamp, they had to find their way off-trail and then a small, unmarked forest path brought them to the marked trail around the lake. After having to focus a while on navigation, following the lake shore for about 7 kilometers enables a calm rhythm of just walking and enjoying the view.*

*While filtering about one liter of water I observed the light reflections from the lake surface moving in soft waves on the grey rocks and on the warm brown colors of the pine tree trunks. I admired a small light purple colored flower plant next to me. One of the other hikers would definitely like the color I thought back then. The plant is called Devil's bit scabious. It's one of the latest flowering species of the year, flowering between August and September. No wonder, it caught my attention on this hike!*

*17:25 I packed and continued. Some moments later I met one of the other hikers, who was logically coming from the other direction, as I surrounded the lake in the opposite way. I still remember the smile on her face. She told me she was going to search for a swimming spot on the "kuikankierros" and then heading towards the sleeping spot area. Only a view minutes later the other hiker wrote in our group chat, that she had already arrived at the small forest lake, will go for a swim there, filter water and then look for a tent spot. I smiled! In the morning, we were walking one behind each other and now everyone was doing already their own program! When I arrived at the forest lake, the other hiker also had this smile on her face! The smile and her whole body-language told exactly the emotions she told me shortly before going for the evening swim. She told that yesterday she felt especially with the GPS navigation still insecure, but now she loves to use it! She decided to take a short-cut with the help of the map to have time to go swimming at the forest lake and search for the first sleeping spot with enough time before sunset.*

*I went to search for a sleeping spot on the other side of the forest lake, as I never had been there. I just went up the hill next to the pond and set up my tent pretty close, so I could still see the lake from my night place. I also noticed that other people could see my tent from the path going around the lake. It was not the coziest spot, more a pragmatcal decision.*

*The other one also arrived at the forest lake, and we wrote in the chat, that we will meet later all together at the lake shore, when all have set up their tents, to share some thoughts before the first night alone and how to go on tomorrow.*

*As we discussed before the hike, everyone sent a picture of their tent as soon as it was set up, with a short description, how the feeling at this spot is. As well as the coordinates through the terrain map app “karttaselain”. Through that we could all mark and save our own and the sleeping spots of the others in the map of the app. On the one hand it gives a feeling of security knowing where the others are and on the other hand it’s just funny and interesting so see the combination of the three spots on the map.*

*We met at 20:00 at the lake and first I had the idea to also visit all the sleeping spots together to introduce our tent spots to each other, but as it was already late, it made more sense to just go back to the own tents and do the evening routines. We said good night and decided to inform the others in the morning over the group chat, how the night was and when we are planning to leave in the morning.*

*My place was in the north of the lake, and the other were in the south and on the west side. Not too far away from, but still far away enough that we didn’t notice a single sign of the presence of each other. But the presence of the moon was impossible to dismiss. It was almost full moon. First it rose as a big orange ball and then covered the forest lake in bright moonlight. For a while I watched the moon from my sleeping bag, having the doors of my tent open, but in the end, I had to close them, as the moon was just too bright. As we went to bed so late last night, I almost fell asleep after eating with my hiking clothes on. I changed and closed my eyes. I could hear an owl close by and the loud, far-carrying haunting trumpeting calls from a group of cranes. I assumed the cranes are gathering now on the swamp, where we were on the day. Probably the others are also hearing them now. These little things make sleeping outside so special.*

### Day 2 but together ~ 18km



*The others had their first nights alone in a tent! Alone, but together! We shared thoughts about the night in our group chat, and one of them also did hear the owl and the moon also had its impact on them. Everything went well; one wrote that falling asleep felt at the start a bit difficult. Maybe “normal” for the first night, and something what just happens while hiking. I remembered my first night alone in a tent. My first night alone was a bit involuntary and before it, I somehow thought, that I never could do this.*

*Exactly now four years ago, I went with a friend hiking 1500km through Latvia and Estonia. After 500km the other one decided to end the hike and I made the decision to go on alone. I never ever would have left alone on this hike. I never thought that I could do this. But in the end, I hiked my first 1000km alone. It opened a new world for me.*

*I still get goosebumps when I think that I was somehow with them, when they had their first nights alone. That we shared this moment together. And this was only the first night! We will share three more nights and they will hike four days alone.*

*Of course we were somehow near each other, but still they did everything alone. They searched for a suitable spot for their tents and where they feel comfortable. They set up their tents alone, tents what they*

*just got to know one day before. Took care of filtering water and making food. Hiked alone for the last half of the day.*

*And although we knew where the others were, the distance was far enough that you had the feeling of a night alone in the forest. As we couldn't hear or see anything from each other. Only sounds of the forest. It definitely feels different, if you go hiking with a group and you can hear the others in their tents, even if you sleep alone in your tent.*

*At least I really had the feeling of being alone there, staring at the forest pond and the moon. Still, it felt special to share some thoughts about the night with the others. It's different then writing to a friend in Germany that the moon was fascinating and the sound of the owl made me smile, than writing it to them, who were in the somehow same situation. And reading their descriptions!*

*Tränuhals 10:25: I woke up early on this day and started hiking at 7:45, because I wanted to spend more time at the swamp pond Tränuhals. As there is a bit tricky off-trail part before it, I thought it would be also a good spot to wait for the others. Not because I didn't believe in them, that they could do it, but I thought it would be perfect to get immediately feedback, how the part felt for them and if I could improve the description in the trail-guide.*

*The swamp pond has on its east side a steep rising rocky cliff. When I arrived there, an eagle rose in the air from that cliff. I had never seen an eagle so close by before.*

*One of the hikers wrote that she wanted to explore and enjoy her sleeping spot area in the morning and that's why decided to start hiking a bit later. It made me a bit nervous, but I wanted to let her have her own rhythm. In the worst case, she would have to set up her tent after sunset, what is not even a bad thing to get the experience. And I would know then that I have to point out more clearly in the trail-guide how much time you need for this chapter. But this is exactly what they are testing now with me. Something what I can't test on my own. I know the trail already by heart and only have to use the map for the off-trail parts. The last times when I hiked the trail, I still red my own trail-descriptions and made notes, thinking about how it would feel for someone for the first time. What do I have to mention, that it's easier to orientate? On this hike, I didn't open the trailguide even once. I didn't make any notes about the route, from my perspective. The others are testing exactly this, I just have to listen to them. Ask the right questions.*

*12:05 I'm still waiting at the Tränuhals swamp pond, for the first hiker to arrive. Before the trickier off-trail part, the day starts with an easier, marked trail around three forest ponds. The atmosphere there always feels calming and somehow cute. A contrast to the large lake Meiko one day before.*

*While I was lying on my back, enjoying the sun and the silence of the place, I could see two eagles flying in circles above me. Maybe they have their nest nearby? I love staying at one place in nature for a bit longer as much as walking in my own rhythm for some hours without a break.*

*At 12:45 one of the hikers arrived and told me that the other one is also close by, they met just a minute ago at the beginning of the swamp pond. Again, it was impossible not to get touched by her excitement,*

*joy and how she seems to be in her element. She told me that she never experienced the calls of an owl and the rising of the moon so intensely like last night alone in her tent.*

*The following part is about 1km straight off trail through a more flat, rocky and wide forest area. In between there is another swamp pond. It's smaller, almost round like a circle. This time I stopped there to filter water and noticed that I haven't spent yet more time at this place, although I did the hike already often. Since my first visit at the swamp pond Tränuhals, I was so fascinated, that I always made a longer break there. The first time I arrived there, I cried, because it felt so unbelievable beautiful and I felt the desire to share that moment with someone. It was in October 2024, back then I didn't know that the first two persons would be those two hikers now almost one year later.*

*The atmosphere at the second pond feels different. Maybe it has something more from a "lost place" but also wild and exciting. Maybe Tränuhals is more inviting for me as it has this steep rock wall on one side, where you can find a cozy place to observe from above. At this pond, Kommelpott, it's maybe on the first glimpse trickier to find a "cozy corner". But I'm sure it is there, and I want to find mine the next time.*

*I continued to the next large open swamp area. The swamp Grenomossen. Here I sat down to make "breakfast" aka lunch at 15:00, porridge. Before I just ate nuts, dried fruits and a bit of crispy bread. I decided to wait there for the hikers to arrive. As this will be the last more challenging off-trail part on this 5-day hike, so I again wanted to hear the feedback right away. Although I felt a bit bad, because maybe I ruin a bit their alone time. But in the end, we all knew that we are testing the concept together.*

*At 15:30 and 16:00 the hikers arrived and went on. Both described this 1 km as more difficult than I expected. We spoke that basically the terrain itself is not too tricky, but that of course it takes more time to walk there off-trail and at the same time it's a lot about checking the GPS for the direction, as there are no landmarks to orientate, just forest. I should mention more precisely that it's normal to be slow there. One was pretty annoyed by the deer flies. They are indeed annoying. They land on you and immediately lose their wings, because they think you are a moose and they can now live on you. They start walking around your body and shaking your body doesn't help you have to pick them with your fingers and put them on the ground. They don't bite or harm humans, but it can feel disturbing.*

*Both continued crossing the open swamp area and I decided to give them a head-start and hike with enough distance after them, so they could search first for their sleeping spots at the river side. From here to the river, it would be only 2h walking on dirt roads.*

*I hiked the dirt roads listening to music, singing and dancing a bit. I felt released, the most difficult parts were already over, and everything went well, I felt like now I could be much more relaxed. If my trail description and the GPS trail was logical enough so that they could find their way until now, the rest will be easy. And at the same time, they get every hour more routine and confidence with the gear and everything. Again, I didn't question their skills, but mine. I never wrote a trail-description before, what should guide other people alone. Although I was optimistic that I did describe everything*

*thoughtfully and accurate, using text, pictures, the gps trail and different kinds of maps, I could not know for sure, if it works out, until other person (they), will test it on their own.*

*There are other sleeping spot terrain options next to the river side, but directly to the river is of course interesting. The trail follows only for some hundred meters the wild running river. The shortest but most challenging off-trail part. It's steep and there are a lot of falling trees. In between there is something like a path you can follow, but it's definitely not about "walking" there. The idea is more to get close to the river, to either spend there some time to enjoy this special nature environment or to set up your tent there for one night.*

*I knew when I will come after them, I will probably cross their sleeping spots. I met the first one at the place where I slept the first time there in October 2024 and the second was on a river island, where I was in June 2025. I continued and found another island in the middle of the river. I set up my tent and enjoyed that the river was just 2m in front of my door. I was hungry and couldn't be happier with my pasta in tomato sauce.*

*The sky was clear and I wondered where the moon was, as it rose yesterday pretty fast after it got dark. Around midnight the moonlight woke me up. As the river has on both sides steep cliffs and high trees with a lot of leaves, the moon was just hidden the first half of the night behind the cliff. Now that the moon was maybe on its highest point, two single stripes of the moonlight made it through the trees down to the river. I had to climb out of my tent to watch the spectacle for some minutes. On the next morning, I tried to sketch it in my hiking diary, as the two moonlight streams looked so special coming down to the river, but it was impossible to take a picture of it with the camera of my phone.*



### Day 3 – through walking ~23km

*09:17 island on the river: One of the hikers wrote in the morning update that she got also surprised by the moonlight in the night, as the single streams looked on the first glimpse like the light of a task lamp. Additionally, she had a visit of an otter on her river island in the night. She could listen to it. I also saw an otter twice on this hiking trail. Once I could observe it in a swamp pond, while I was sitting still and filtering water. The other time, I watched it from my sleeping bag, swimming in the sea, what was covered in blue-pink sunset light right in front of my tent spot. The other hiker wrote that she had already left at 08:00 in the morning to have a lot of time for the hiking day. As yesterday I started earlier to wait for them for feedback after the two more tricky off-trail parts, I decided to leave today later in the morning, to just let them do their own thing. They gave feedback that yesterday my presence and little support in the background felt good, somehow it had a double effect. I got the confirmation from them that the trail description works and that they enjoy it and I gave them the confirmation that they are good in time and doing well.*

*I enjoyed staying longer in the morning on my river-island. I listened to the sound of the running water and watched it going by, how it surrounded the small rocks in the river bay. It's one of the nature environments of the trail, I would like to explore more. I have been there only some times for the night. It's different to all other places. Somehow, it's also a bit creepy. I guess because there are these high cliffs with a lot of leaf trees on both sides, so it's somehow darker there and you only see in both directions short parts of the river, as it goes in curves. The sound of the river overtones almost all other sounds. My curiosity towards nature calms down the slightly spooky atmosphere. And I like the fact that it's somehow this wild hidden place where I go spending the night. As the trail after the river brings you to the city of Siuntio and if you take them all, you will have four hills with a wide view on that hiking day. Pretty much the opposite of this river environment.*

*11:00 I filtered a liter of water and went on. I climbed up the steep riverside. The environment changed suddenly in the moment I left the forest. Suddenly you are surrounded by fields and a wide view on the horizon in different directions. I continued to the hill Krejansberget and was a bit surprised as I saw one of the other hikers sitting there on one view point side writing diary. I thought I gave them a lot of time before me, but in the end, I thought, she is just doing right, enjoying a spot longer. From there you have a view on the valley, where a small river is crossing fields and you can see the church of Siuntio. So far it had been also always my coffee break spot, although I knew there are lots of other spots on this hill as well as on the next hill two kilometers later. I decided to walk a small round around the hill top and sat down on another side of the hill. I was here also the first time I hiked the trail in October 2024, it was the only time I met other people up there. It was an older couple; they were collecting mushrooms. They were also surprised to see me, they haven't ever seen anyone with a hiking backpack here. They said that they don't meet often people here, maybe sometimes someone riding a horse, but they go regularly, as it is their nearby-nature. They always check the view if there is something new. There hadn't been anything new in the last years though, they said. Beside more forest cuts.*

*At 12:30 I left from the hill Krejansberget, I had the desire to just walk. The trail continues to the old stone church of Siuntio. On my hike in November 2024, I went there to a classical music concert and then set up my tent on hill Krejansberget. This time I skipped the church visit and followed the road to the hotel Siuntio. After the hotel there is a small, marked nature path, leading to a viewpoint on a small hill and to the shore of lake Tjusträsk. In comparison to the forest area on the first two days, there is a much wider variety of leaf trees on this hill next to the lake, so the atmosphere got more autumnal, due to the already slightly colored leaves. There is a bird watching tower next to the lake, and I could see one of the hikers there and decided to say quickly hello. She was about to leave and told me that she had just had her lunch break on the bird-watching tower and enjoyed the sun and watching how the wind moved the reeds in the bay. I said that I haven't tested the place yet as a break-spot, but maybe now. She said she can recommend it. She seemed happy and told me that she is now looking forward to just come into a rhythm of walking and having time to be with her thoughts, as she felt like she hadn't really time for that yet. I said that this is maybe a bit the point, that on the first two days, you have to focus more on nature through orienteering and the off-trail parts bring you away from daily-life thoughts and into the hiking experience, but from now on the trail gets easier and there is more space for just walking and*

*thinking. She said that she had felt this effect and then continued her hike and I took over her bird-watching tower break-spot and started to cook my porridge.*

*I was happy, something changed for me compared to the day before. Yesterday I waited for them on purpose to get a direct feeling and feedback on how they are managing with my trail-description and the off-trail parts, now this meeting was not on purpose, just a coincidence. I felt much more far away from a “hiking guide role”, more like two independent solitary hiking sisters\* meeting on the trail, sharing shortly impressions from the day so far and then both going on doing our own thing. That’s exactly how I hoped that the “alone but together” group hiking concept would feel like.*

*The topic of this chapter is “walking”. Reflecting about the large spectrum of types of walking, what’s the meaning of “hiking” for you and how it could be a daily practice. Here the template of the letter suggests sharing your thoughts on this topic now after the hike, how it might have affect your daily life and maybe share what has been or what is your next hike after this trail. As I wrote already before, at the moment one quote of Sara Maitland when she is reflecting about solitude and silence brings for me the idea of “hiking as a daily practice” with its meaning for my current life situation to the point; “Nonetheless I began to recognize that silence and simplicity do have a connection”. I think I got also so much attached to hiking, as there is so much simplicity in it. You have everything you need for one week or even several months with you in your backpack, you wear all the time the same clothes, eat mostly the same simple things and you just walk. Always when I come home from a longer hike, I have the feeling I own too much stuff and when I once had to deal with bedbugs, everything what was maybe “too much” became a concrete burden. Regarding simplicity and hiking, I also think often about the simple daily routines you have on a longer hike and the joy you get from simple things around you. I don’t want to feel these only on a holiday hike once or two time a year but find ways to integrate them in my daily life. I learned that the spectrum of how you can do this is so unbelievable wide and you can adapt it to your own life situation. It can be a way to observe the season and maybe also the seasons have an impact on this spectrum. For example in winter 23/24 I slept once a week outdoors, and in winter 25/26 I had zero nights outdoors, as I didn’t found a way to build them into my daily-life in my current life situation. As I live close to the sea I decided to make a short walk almost daily to the shore and took one picture per day always at the same spot. I printed them and hung them up on my wall. I observed the ice and snow coming, different animal tracks accruing over night, admired especially foggy days, and saw the ice leaving 3 months later, listened to the first waves and the first birds coming back from the South. I also started walking to one of my workplaces two times a week instead of going by bike. It’s a 1,5 h walk. In the beginning it was still dark when I left in the morning and walked back in the evening. With the coming spring and more daylight I extended my walks and walked in the morning to the seashore and in the evening to the little nameless swamp pond, what it also part of this hike. I take always a picture at both spots and write some lines what I can notice. I walked 2,5h in the morning, did 8h of work and walked 2,5 h after work. My day starts slowly, I always arrive happy at work, and I end my day slowly and come also home happy and evened. For me walking the same routes over and over again is the opposite of boring. With every time I get more attentive and see more. That’s why I’m already looking forward to hike this trail soon for the seventh time.*

*I so much admit to those quotes from Rebecca Solnit's book "Wanderlust" (and not only to those!):*

*"Walking, ideally, is a state in which the mind, the body, and the world are aligned, as though they were three characters finally in conversation together, three notes suddenly making a chord. Walking allows us to be in our bodies and in the world without being made busy by them. It leaves us free to think, without being wholly lost in our thoughts." (Solnit 2022, p.5)*

*"I like walking because it is slow, and I suspect that the mind, like the feet, works about three miles an hour. If this is so, then modern life is moving faster than the speed of thought, or thoughtfulness." (Solnit 2022, p.10).*

*When going to sleep I can feel the same kind of tiredness, I feel sometimes in my tent after a long hiking day and being outside a lot. In the end I walked 20km. While writing this letter I noticed that I am missing the nights out in my tent, it brings you in a special way so close to nature. The other essential part of hiking for me next to walking. But I feel like now this routine of the longer walks fits better to my daily life rhythm, but I want to build in the nights out, as soon as it feels suitable. When writing this sentence, I'm planning exactly in two weeks to hike the trail again. I will test the trail in a 6-day version. It was an idea of one of the hikers, when we had the reflection round together after the hike. While writing this letter I also again noticed, that the first two days offer so much to explore, that it's easily possible to make three days out of it.*

*At 15:00 I finished my break at the bird watching tower and started walking down the streets through the valley towards the city of Siuntio. I went quickly to the supermarket to fill up some snack supplies and continued walking. After Siuntio the surrounding changes from fields to mainly forest environment, with here and there a glimpse on a field or the lake nearby. In between you cross the Siuntio river over a bridge, where it occurs in a fast flowing rapid. After this rapid I could see again one of the hikers in front of me, maybe now wonder, as although I gave them some time before me, I'm just walking the trail fast, as I don't have to check the map for orientation at all at this part. I decided to make another half hour break and just went some meter into forest next to the street. I had been there already for a pee break when hiking the trail the year before. Back then there was an old rockinghorse left between the trees. Now I found a pair of old skiers there. Seems like someone uses this spot for getting rid of old stuff. I lay down, charged my phone and ate some nuts and just watched the sky with the trees in front of it.*

*I continued walking and noticed that I was a bit nervous about the last part of the day. In the end there will be an off-trail part leading the hikers on a hill for the night. But the atmosphere of walking down the dirt road surrounded by trees covered in the evening light calmed me down. I reached the kings bridge and was about to cross it, as I always go down to the riverbank on the opposite side to filter there my water, when someone shouted "Mia, here". The two others were under the bridge. I didn't even know that it was possible to be there. I climbed down. They met there, as it's the last water filtering spot before the night and as filtering takes some time, logically you can bump there into each other. I was so excited that they found a place, I haven't noticed although I had been there already five times. I also heard that one of them went to the Café in Siuntio, where I also haven't been so far. I loved it! Exactly how I imagined! We are hiking the same trail but still seeing and experiencing different things. One*

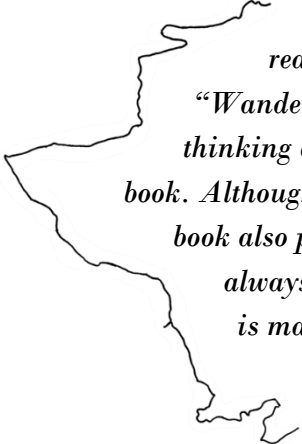
*was already ready with filtering and left, then the other one and I still had to filter a liter, so we got naturally distance between us.*

*I continued and soon one of the hikers called me as she was confused finding the sleeping spot. The description told that you go up a hill, so she did it, but it didn't match with the GPS track, so she got confused. I guided her to "the right" hill and learned that I must be concrete in the description, as in fact you almost don't notice the "hill" from the foot of it, it just looks like forest. On the other side is a steep rising rock, what maybe irritates. But as you walk into this forest it suddenly gets steep and after 5 minutes you are on the top and you have almost a 360° view, what you never would expect from down there. While climbing up I met the other hiker and then left searching for a sleeping spot. The others said that they orientate towards the east side of the hilltop to watch the sunrise on the next morning. I have also often been there but now wanted to give them space and test something new. One of the hikers just had noticed, that due to this hike, I'm somehow "forced" to test new spots, although I like to do the same over and over again. So I just went to the other side of the hilltop and walked a bit down there. Only after 200m there was suddenly a 2x2m large swampy pond. Behind it a steep rising maybe 2 meters high rocky wall. In the middle of the pond, you could see more dark green moss under the water and on the sides the moss was light green and red. I loved it, like a miniature swamp! I could set up my tent right next to it, as it has doors on two sites. I could enter my tent from the back and on the other side was directly the pond. I could just open the door and watch it from my sleeping back!*

*Soon the others sent pictures of their sleeping spots and the location through the terrain map app. One had set up her tent directly on the top, she had to secure it with stones, as it was not possible to get the tent stakes into the rocky ground. There was a strong wind this evening, so pretty good job, I thought! The other one went a bit down on the east side to have a more secure place from the wind. I found it funny, both had this wide view from the hilltop and I had my miniature swamp as a view.*

*I saw the moon rising and I climbed up the rocky wall next to my tent, to have a better look at it. I was surprised that I also had a wide view over the forests from there. I lay down a bit, watched the orange moon and the stars above, but with tiredness rising pretty quickly I went back to my sleeping bag. Before I fell asleep one of the hikers wrote in the group chat, if we would like to all share one song, what we enjoyed listening while hiking on the trail, so we could listen also to the songs of the others while hiking and feel somehow connected. I loved the idea and the following two hiking days I listened to our three songs on repeat whenever the trail made me want to listen to music. Usually, I only do it while walking streets, as soon as I enter a forest path, I only want to listen to the surrounding noises.*

Day 4 Through writing ~ 16 km



I still cannot find words for how much it would mean to me, if I get the possibility to read the experience from other solitary hiking sisters\* on that trail. In the book “Wanderers. A history of women walking” from Kerri Andrews, is pointed out, how walking, thinking and writing was an essential combination for the women, who are introduced in this book. Although a lot of them walked alone, their writing connected them with other women. Here the book also points out, that through history despite of social restrictions and norms, women have always walked and written about it, but in a lot of publications the history of walking&writing is male (p.9-36), as “the writers of our history have focused on the experience of men – a group of people with the time and leisure to walk, who have been authorized by social conventions to be mobile and alone.” (p. 34).

For me writing is also an important part of hiking and walking. In the trail guide I shared a lot of quotes from other women describing their relationship to the connection of writing & walking. By sharing those and some concrete ideas for a hiking diary practice while hiking this trail I hoped to give some inspiration for the other hikers to find out if they also can find joy in this connection. And it worked! Before them writing and hiking myself and reading about the experience from other women gave me a feeling of connection. With myself and the women\* I read in books about. Now I can say I have the connection with those two hikers through hiking, writing and reading. It was not even planned before that all this would come together in these shared letters. It wouldn't have happened if they wouldn't have found joy in writing hiking diary on the trail and if they wouldn't have written so much per hand on the reflection template I gave them as a base for our reflection round.

I also love the different perspectives and experiences they brought with them regarding writing. One already had a regular journaling practice, for the other one this wasn't a part of her life, but she decided to write diary on that trail. On this day the one who was already journaling, wrote a poem and also when she had a sudden unexpected nature experience, she stopped to write it down immediately, she gave me the feedback, that this felt really good and she wouldn't have done it if I wouldn't have suggested it in the trail-guide.

Now writing this, I have been with them recently in contact over our group chat, and the one for whom journaling wasn't a part of her life, is now at the same time writing this letter! Per hand! When I was writing day 3, she was writing day 2, so somehow it felt like we are hiking the trail “alone but together” again “through writing”. And apropos again. The other one immediately wrote that reading our messages makes her also looking forward to start the letter as soon as she has the space for it. And that she would like to hike the trail one day again in the midsummer time. That's on my list for 2027!

No wonder I think, that this “solitary hiking project” is developing so slow. Or maybe the “outcome” looks from the outside pretty less. I can't say that I have guided already 10 times a group of 8 people on a week hike, how other hiking guides would probably have easily done in this time. But this is also not what I want. I want exactly this slow, deep and ongoing, sustainable, and long-lasting process. And

*writing can be one connecting element of it. Hiking this trail is like a five day storyline, but depending on the hiker and the seasons it will be always a different story, though the core remains.*

*Back to the September morning on the hill. We all did feel and hear the wind in the night, what made sleeping partly more difficult. One hiker noticed a problem with the filter bags, we all had the same problem, they were not waterproof any more. But luckily some tape helped. Still so happy about my miniature swamp I climbed up again the rocky wall in the morning and watched it with my coffee from above, enjoying walking around barefoot. One of the hikers passed by as she had continued her hike and I was glad; I could introduce her to my little own tent-miniature-swamp-world.*

*Today would be an easy day. Only finding the way down off-trail from the Kasaberget hill, where we stayed the night would demand concentration on orienteering (knowing the terrain already pretty well, I noticed that I had passed the hiker, who started before me). But then it would be just walking dirt roads down to the seashore. The seashore belongs to a nature-recreation area and has a marked path system, easy to follow. I like to walk the dirt roads part fast, I only made one stop in the middle for filtering water at a creek going through the fields. Some hundred meters before the seashore there is a bird watching tower, but this time I skipped it. I wanted to just enjoy the view on the open sea.*

*At 16:00 I reached the “island” Klobbacka at the sea and found a cozy place on the west side, where it was windless. On the other side the wind was blowing strongly. The rocks formed a natural comfort place to sit and I could lean against them while letting my feet hang down towards the water. The rocks had this warm copper-red color. I did something crazy and made a coffee, also it was so late. I watched the alga moving down me in the sea with the rhythm of the waves. Under the water surface they seemed to be dark green and on the surface light green and over the surface they were white. Until now my favorite sleeping spot on the sea-area was exactly on this “island”, as you are allowed to set up your tent everywhere. In some recreational areas, it’s only allowed at the campfire spots. So here you can find your own personal place directly on the shore. There is of course the path going around the island, but in the evening, there aren’t too many people any more. For this night I decided to continue some more kilometers to test for the first time the official sleeping spot on a sandy beach with the campfire place, dry toilet and the well. It hadn’t been inviting for me before, because why should I choose it, if I could have my own place. There it could of course happen that in the evening a group of people is coming for camping, and they also may be loud. They may be friendly and I might have an interesting encounter, or they may be annoying or even giving me an insecure feeling.*

*From this late coffee spot, I could see the coast part what I walked before, and as I noticed someone with a red hiking backpack, I decided to slowly pack my stuff. Then I saw the other hiker walking above the rocky wall I was sitting. I called spontaneously her name to say hello. Now I think that maybe I should have been quite to give her more the “hiking alone” feeling, but in this moment I just wanted to share happiness with her. Again I wasn’t any more in the hiking guide role, but a solitary hiking sister\*. We had a chat and we observed a snake for a while together what was swimming down in front of us in the sea crossing the green dancing alga. I continued and met the other one, both were trying to find a sleeping spot on the island on the west side to be secure of the wind. I walked four more*

kilometers and arrived at the camping spot with the sandy beach. There was no one and I set up my tent on the sand in the east corner of the beach. The path was directly behind me and at least some trees gave me wind protection. My tent was still shaking a bit from the wind and it blew pretty loud through the trees above me. Still there is this contrast of silence in the tent, as it's a little windless bubble. You can see and hear the wind so close, but on your body, you don't feel or hear it.

I ate my tomato-pasta sitting in the sand in front of my tent watching the waves on the sea. We shared our sleeping spots with pictures, a description and the locations. One of the others was happy from the start, the other was still a bit skeptical about her place as she noticed also in the late evening still people walking close by. I could understand that it must feel different, as the last sleeping spots were all more private and hidden. Somehow I thought that it could be maybe also in the end interesting to have these different experiences to compare. But I hoped for her that she could still enjoy the last night, as it definitely was also a pretty special one, right next to the sea. And she could! Sometimes it just takes time to arrive at one place and make it your own and feel comfortable. Sometimes this doesn't work hundred percent as with my spot. I didn't really feel "fear" but I also didn't feel comfortable and cozy there. But that was ok. As I know how to find places, where I feel good, sometimes I like to test different ones. That night I slept less due to not feeling cozy, the loud wind and I guess the late coffee.

#### Day 5 Towards Body-liberation ~16km

"The way women feel about their bodies is also dedicated by the patriarchy, as women are taught to see themselves primarily as objects for men. This is why Cixous emphasizes how important it is for women to use their bodies unashamedly as a source of inspiration and strength. [...] She also swore on the power of being alone, as it allows women the differentness, to achieve that." (Diehl 2023, p. 43)

There are so many thoughts to share about hiking & body-liberation. For this letter I decided to now stay with these two quotes, as they somehow close the circle from alone-but together- through walking – through writing – towards body-liberation.

"Dreams.  
In a forest  
With snow  
Down a path  
I ask.  
If a person is alone in a forest  
Do they have a gender?"  
(Mina Tolu)

Somehow not being grown up as cis-men we have probably a common history regarding how our bodies are seen and treated. And I think the other common thing could be that while hiking alone we all can experience that little semi-patriarchal free time and space. Where basically gender roles don't have an impact and it's not about how your body looks, but how you feel about it and how you take care of it and what you experience through it. These are of course just shared common frames and the individual experiences and processes differ from each other. That's also the idea behind this projects name "riot trails". Before a hike in spring 2024 I had a conversation with a friend on what was important for my own "body-liberation". While hiking I thought about it and the slogan "riot don't diet" and the slogan "trails not scales" came to my mind. The first one is exactly the understanding of the impact of a patriarchal society on women's bodies and the second is from a body-liberation hiking group called "fat girls hiking", who emphasize the joys of experiencing your body while hiking. It felt for me like a good mix of theory and lived praxis. I felt like this was what was and is carrying me on this journey. Two pillars. Or two legs. My legs. I took my pen and wrote "riot don't diet" on the left one and "trails not

scales” on the right shin. I hiked in a dress so I could read those words while hiking and I read “riot trails”. And I thought this could be the project name.

Thinking back to this hike in September, I still have to smile about the moment when we packed our stuff after the hike to go to my family’s summer cottage to relax and reflect together. While packing all of us were thinking about what to wear on the trip. In the end we just put on again our hiking clothes.

The last hiking day was still windy and rain was promised. I drank my coffee sitting in the sand and enjoyed digging my barefoot feet a bit under it and moving them. I took water from the well, what unfortunately was claimed since some month as not any more drinkable. Still an easy water source in combination with filtering. While filtering it started to rain, but I could do it pretty luxury in a dry place under the campfire shelter. The others wrote that they had a calm night and enjoyed their spots. One sent a picture from her spot with the sea and the book “history of women walking”. This book was my company, when I hiked the trail the first time. While hiking the last kilometers, I listened how the author talked about it, how she feels connected with all the women who hiked over and over the same trails, that she is now also hiking. I had to cry. I imagined how it would be if this project really comes true and I will hike there for the last kilometers alone and then meet with other solitary hiking sisters\* at the gas station, the end of the hike. Now this was really happening! This morning I decided to go on quickly as I expected one of the others soon and I wanted to give them the space alone to filter water at this sandy beach in the rain. I just wanted to walk through the rain, listen to music, dance - enjoy the feeling that the concept idea worked out. Not only did they give feedback, that this alone-but-together concept helped them to make the step into hiking alone, also I enjoyed the concept completely. I don’t really like to hike in groups, but with them it didn’t feel like this at all. I did my own thing, my own rhythm and I also enjoyed meeting them in between. Although I made a long distance hike and hiked quite a lot, I never really met with other hikers on my hikes. It seemed like I chose always not so popular hiking trails and of course on my DIY-trails there are not really other hikers. But somehow hiking alone on long distance trails means also a culture of a trail community, as you meet with other hikers, share maybe a night spot or even walk for some hours together, share hints and information and meet maybe again later. I never had that. Until now! My little own solitary hiking sisters\* trail community! Until now we are only three, but I think this community could grow slowly.

I arrived at 12:47 at the gas station. Took off my wet clothes, bought a coffee and a bun and wrote the last impression, waiting for the others.

They arrived at 14:59. Together. Completely wet, but smiling in a way, I will never forget. One had made a small break under a bus station maybe 2 kilometers before the end, so they met and the other one asked if they would walk together the last part, what they did.

And what happened then, still gives me goosebumps. They didn’t sit down at my table, but both of them took their own table with some distance and they wrote their last hiking diary memories.

Only after that we came together at one table.