

Portugalled



In the early morning the sky turns light blue between wisps of mist. Lack of clarity in the atmosphere heralds the heat on this October day in Évora. Morning rest disturbed by a monotonous murmur of radio commentary provided by a sports reporter. Then in the background an announcement to which I focus my deaf ears. Catching that it is about a new song, released by Juliet.

Puzzling

They don't make you happy. Economists with their leading themes that the world is bad. Growing inequality, persistent stagnation, stock market bubbles. It would make me gloomy if I let myself be carried away in this delusion of the day. Sometimes our human life looks like a fragile branch. As a bridge over a fathomless abyss. You stick with it for as long as you can.

One day you'll fall down, one just as good as the other. Meanwhile, no one knows what to expect next. Ended up in an imaginary film set, it seems. In my nightmares I'm startled by wide fluttering coattails chasing macabre characters. Dark shadows fly around the corner to ghostly dissolve into thin air. Passing under mysterious arches, covering alleys devoid of daylight.



Attractive

Évora, sometimes like walking through a haunted house in a bad dream. Coming across young people everywhere I read, moving quickly through the streets in black capes. Traditionally dressed university (UÉ) students. It's all right, I think to myself, but I didn't see them. Nowhere in the city center, not a single example of this type, niente, nada!

Julia Schellekens, stage name Juliet, released the song '*Portugallig*' (in Dutch). Which, among others Frits Spits spoke highly of in *De Taalstaat*, I understand. Because of a lament over her relationship that has gone wrong. Left unloved during a Portuguese holiday. The lyrics grab the listener by the guts, her website promises.

Juliet's tragicomic songs have a strong message and are recognizable to many.

From: [julietzegthet](#)

I developed a fascination for one of the oldest university towns in Europe beyond the stately medieval city wall. Where splendor and magnificence abound in the center, within walking distance. Wandering through the former Jewish quarter, a succession of narrow streets and patios. Facades of white houses with other accents.



Mood

Balconies overlooking intimate courtyard gardens and historic monuments. Charming I find them the narrow, winding streets, roof terraces, squares and gates. At first glance, a city with many striking, white classical buildings. Quite touristy yet charming and well worth the effort. A bonus for those who can stumble up the spiral staircase.

Via a claustrophobic tube no less than 135 steps up into the bell tower. From above, on the roof of the Sé, you can look out over the vast surroundings. Where sleepy villages doze in a tapestry of green hills. The Cathedral of Évora is one of the oldest and most important sights in the city. By the way, I also read the largest Gothic church in Portugal.

Comforting is my favorite hour, animated by the soft sunlight that sweeps over the patio table. Once the afternoon is getting ready for nightfall. My ear catches conversations in Portuguese pitch, of which I understand practically nothing. A stream of buzzing sentences with those drawing vowels, without the harsh guttural sounds so characteristic of our mother tongue.

The symbolism of slow cloud veils that stretch over the sky blue is striking. Just sweeps of white paint artfully applied in that taut ultramarine firmament. Ever since my earliest imagination, the call of an adventurous life on the Iberian Peninsula has sounded.



Smartass

Later, oh later, a mascot of freedom thinking to travel to Portugal once, for all and definitively. Ever further in time the hyperbole of old man hypochondria, now that it's too late for all that. In Portugal, the combination of patience and long lines is a national sport. The British are champions of waiting your turn. The queue in the supermarket grows because no attendant shows up.

A Portuguese woman makes a brisk approach, turns, walks back, and catches the attention of a random member of staff. Apparently she thinks she has deserved preferential treatment. Requisitioned from the drummed up shop assistant to whom she simultaneously passes on her order. An impertinent, cock of the walk insulting the others in line as if they were props.

Oh well, there's plenty of merriment left if you're ready to spit in the face of the demons of grumpiness. Pushing aside the self-pity that overwhelms me over this presumptuous attitude. Exchanged for resignation to the unreason of life. All in all neither drama nor comedy. Borrowed from the choice of words à la Juliet, I say to myself: come on, don't be so Portugalled.