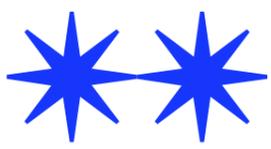


Dear Friend vol 2
April 28 2019, Norway

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Photo of Helen Ready performing I Am Woman in 1971, a screenshot from Youtube
Concept by Sandra Nuut & Ott Kagovere
Title font Cap Sizun by Eva Rank
Text font Kirjatehnika Sans by Andree Paat
Published by Estonian Academy of Arts, Department of Graphic Design
Thanks to Indrek Sirkel





DEAR FRIEND,

How are you? Is spring springing where you are?

I just moved. Did you

know that? 13 years away and here I come

again, in the words of Dolly Parton. I'm happy to be back. The last couple of years have been a bit exhausting – fun, but exhausting. You know, as a freelancer you can end up in this situation where you are a commodity more than your own person. And I'm not saying I felt like that all the time but for sure, *for sure*, it felt like that sometimes when I was packing my bag yet again. Yet again. I love being my own woman. But freelancing made me feel as if I was often left to the devices of someone else: the client, the student, the studio mate, the potential connection at an opening, the tax office.

Do you think being in a permanent position may actually give you more freedom to be your own person?

Lately I've been getting stuck on two sayings, I don't even know why: "Feeling my oats" and "I'm here for it". When I think about it, both of those things are about grounding. Even though feeling my oats can also be about being horny.

So yeah, it feels good to be back. People keep asking me: "How is it being back?" And then they give a telling look. Like a 'good luck trying to change stuff here'. I don't know if I'm really about changing things for other people though. Not directly, anyway, because I don't think that's how change happens. Change happens in a person, and then it can spread. Maybe I'm already feeling things change in me. But I can't tell you if it will affect other people. Also, hey, I have to say a big pet peeve is people who just keep telling themselves "truths" about who they are. Do you know the type of sentiment I'm talking about? "I am just not capable of changing. I am terrible at finishing projects. I always worry." Why do we tell ourselves these static – often negative – stories?

I was talking to our mutual friend the other day about people who resurface in your life and try to pass it off as if they just happened to have gone to the bathroom real quick. You know the kind, lol. And I remember this one person doing it to me and then just being like: "Great soaps in these bathrooms. Btw, miss you." And me saying "I would have missed me too if I didn't call me for 6 months."

So why am I talking about resurfacing? I think because anytime you do decide to go back to something or return to a place – specifically geographical locations – I think we struggle with separating the us that is now and the us that was then. Do you know that one of the theories Stephen Hawking thought was plausible was parallel universes? Which would also open for time-space being flexible components. Ok, super floaty, but what I mean is: It is not a given that we are actually moving on a linear time scale. Perhaps the timeline is indeed flexible and as I'm typing this, in a separate layer of this space-time continuum, we are hanging out. Bet we are having fun. Right?!

Anyway. Anyone who has been in any of my workshops or heard me talk about writing will most likely know I'm a little obsessed with Joan Didion. Maybe I even talked to you about her? You know, she retyped some of Ernest Hemingway's works to learn

his sentence structure. Her work is so very much about rhythm, about the use of negative and positive space. I'm not giving any white dude credit for the accomplishment of women, because sure thing Didion would have aced writing no matter how she got there. Some voices just won't be silenced. However, my favorite quote by her is "We tell ourselves stories in order to live." This, of course, also makes me think about which story I'm telling myself. And maybe you're also thinking the same about yourself, since I just brought it up. Perhaps Didion at one point told herself that a truth could be found in a man's stories. Though I hope not and also I doubt it. While most womxn find their truths in themselves (let's be real, no dude will ever really know what the struggle and intense joy of being a womxn really entails) and searching too hard in men will most likely see you lose the fantastic parts that make up *you*.

I often think of this specifically when it comes to charismatic or powerful male teachers (especially those with never-ending tenure) who don't know where their power must end when it comes to female students. But not only students – often they act this way with their female colleagues as well. Did I ever tell you the story of when I was teaching in the design department at the Oslo Academy of the Arts? I developed and taught a course for four years there, and I was heading into class when I met one of the 'lifers' professors whom I had first met when I started teaching there, and who had at times helped me with photocopies of essays for students when my card didn't work (a frequent problem at the time). We got talking and he was like "Wait, you're heading in to teach a class? You teach here?" and to myself I was like "What is this guy on about?!" and he went: "I just thought you had a boyfriend here." Yeah. Wtf. This story doesn't define me or my teaching practice, but it does contribute to the long story of female abuse in all the different ways it happens in the academic structure. Stop quenching female truth, dudes!

As I'm moving out of teaching mode – had my last tutorials this week – I'm also trying to revisit the moments I have encountered in the last EIGHT (wow shizzles!) years of teaching. That went fast. I may return to it at some point, but I do think any teacher needs to ask how much teaching is about you and how much it is about the students.

When I graduated from my MA, I was already setting up to teach. My thesis was about how practitioners of design can find ways to reflect on their own field and practice. There are no easy ways, but I proposed writing is one of them. It gives you space to be with yourself at the same time as sharing ideas with others. And I truly think that's applicable to many fields in the arts. Though not everyone enjoys it. But I do guess this is my "see you later" letter to my freelance practice. I might return, but for now I am feeling new roads ahead, my oats (as per usual lol), wondering how putting down roots will affect my restlessness and pattern of always needing to move. I'm more excited than I have been in a while, though. That must be good?

Anyway. In the words of Helen Reddy: "I'm still an embryo with a long, long way to go." But I usually know how to get there.

KRISTINA KETOLA XO,
BORE

HELEN REDDY

DOLLY PARTON

OATS

JOAN DIDION