

DEAR FRIEND,

The last couple of days have been very warm and sunny – one of those rare days when everyone seems to feel an urgent need to spend as much time outside as possible.

they give me: “Are you gonna be around [in another city] for a while?” – “Nah, have to go back home to water the plants.” I’d love to get a dog to fill this purpose, but plants will have to do for now.

Maybe you know the project I have been doing with Loore – my former coursemate and close friend – for a while, Knock! Knock! Books. It’s basically a make-believe publishing house, built on fiction-writing and a bunch of merch with its logo. Knock! Knock! began as a kind of escapist mind-place, one that we talked about amid stress and tiredness, while waiting for the bus after working late at school or when walking through town running errands. Over some time – and through working on the project as one of our final works for our graphic design degrees, and then later collaborating with publishers Lugemik and Colorama – Knock! Knock! grew from a nebulous fantasy into a fairly graspable thing.

Loore and I have been living in different cities for a little while now, but still collaborating every now and then, on commissions and events mostly. I think, in a way, Knock! Knock! Books has regained its initial purpose for us. It’s once again less about actual physical publications and more a vague promise of something, of work that is completely ours and stress-free from start to finish. (This, to be clear, has not been true about any of the Knock! Knock! Projects. While every one of the ideas has been conceived in a chill “wouldn’t-it-be-fun-to-do-this”-vibe, alarmingly often accompanied by french fries, a lot of the actual writing and designing happens as feverish late-night sessions, first fueled by beer, then by a lot of caffeine.) As we haven’t had the chance to actually work on any new projects of our own for a while, Knock! Knock! Books is mostly kept alive by talking about it, either between ourselves or occasionally in a presentation format at some institution or art event. I think it’s also a beautiful thing, no? To keep a fiction alive through nothing else but talking about it. The project is, after all, about things that don’t actually exist.

Dear friend, how about meeting up the next time we’re in the same city? The weather is nice – we could hang out at a park or something. Although, if it’s not in Helsinki, then I probably won’t be around for too long. I have to get home to water the plants. :-P

* TAKE CARE *
* AND SEE YOU *
* ELSEWHERE *
* SOON *
* LAGERSPETZ *
* 3 *

* SEEDS *
* CLUTTER *
* KNOCK! KNOCK! BOOKS *
* KEEPING THINGS ALIVE *

it hard to keep my mind on work when the forest next to my house smells of spring flowers and sun-warmed pine needles. A similar joy extends to my apartment, where most of the flat surfaces near the windows are taken up by pots. I sowed basil, rosemary, and cherry tomato seeds in late March, and received a sunflower plant from friends living nearby. (I recently read a beautiful essay in *The New Yorker* named *Seeds, The Gateway Drug to Gardening*, in which writer Charlotte Mendelson explains the amateur’s thrill of growing things with a fiery passion – truly a piece that spoke to my soul.)

To some extent, I think the hooking gratification of actually seeing plants grow, and the responsibility I feel about getting up in the morning to make sure no one’s soil dries out in the intense eastern sun, makes me disillusioned with my professional work. Keeping up the discipline and motivation to study while doing work gigs is difficult, man! I’ve never considered myself extremely ambitious anyway, but growing plants just makes me want to succumb to the dream of the ultimate petit bourgeois life of doing whatever office job just to earn enough for a steady housing situation, where I can grow plants and read fiction.

Of course, I know this is not actually a scenario I’d be happy with. I do deeply enjoy the fact that I have work of many different types and media at once, although my working life often feels like a clutter of weirdly unrelated topics lying around the (metaphorical) desk and piled on top of each other, with some responsibility occasionally hidden underneath the stacks, so I forget about it. (I literally just had a scare as I realised there’s an envelope from the tax office burried on my desk. I’ve been putting off dealing with that one for a while.)

The work also happens in a myriad of places. I have a desk at a shared studio space, which, however, is in a basement, so picky me often prefers daylight over the designated work spot. I have a desk in my studio apartment, which does have plenty of daylight (that’s why the plants are doing fairly well there), but also a morning sun too intense to see the screen. I have appointments in Tallinn fairly often, so a great deal of work happens on whatever free surface I find in the apartment there, as well as on the ferry between the two cities. As a matter of fact, I’ve written a great deal of this letter to you on a ferry (however, for a while I was also eavesdropping on a Finnish lady analysing Eurovision performances for her very uninterested co-traveller – maybe this is the beautiful gesture of destiny, having me there as a secret appreciative audience as I do really enjoy Eurovision a great deal).

I suppose the urge to change this clutter for something more concrete and permanent is just a basic human instinct. Performing some non-scientific, very unprofessional psychoanalysis on myself: maybe growing plants is an attempt to root myself to at least a place, if not to a profession. I do often love the excuse