





# DEAR FRIEND,

Hope you're well.

I'm writing this letter to you on Saturday, 20 June, just ahead of Midsummer's Eve, hoping it will reach you sometime before September.

Having spent the majority of my existence these past months behind the computer, I've grown increasingly fed up with the internet. I long for everything tangible, and so I've thought a lot about snail mail recently. Emails bore me. So it was to my great surprise when, two days ago, I received an email from my once-almost-friend and passionate trickster from the States, Alan Abel—an avid letter-writer and snail mail fan himself. The subject of the email was also 'Alan Abel'. To my great sadness, Alan is no more for already a while now (though more than present in spirit) and so the expectation regarding the email was fairly low. This is what it read:

Laura

<https://bit.ly/3fRRIMh>

Alan

*Google announced swipe gesture controls are coming to Gmail iOS starting today, and should be available to all iOS Gmail users soon. Though the update doesn't add any new commands to Gmail, it makes it much easier to quickly manage your inbox by letting users customize what left or right "swipe" actions do.*

*It's hard to mess up, even when you mess up. Your eggs are overcooked and rumped? Flop them out of the pan onto a waiting mound of the rice mixture, like a shameful blanket. This will still taste good. Your egg disk is pale and under cooked? Add the rice, fold it in half, turn the light down low, and cover the pan with a lid for a minute or two. The gentle heat will steam the egg until set. This too will taste good.*

*ttxcr oikophobia spring upgathered  
zwpastoralized terrifyingly marshy mammas<sup>1</sup>*

You have to apologise for I'm really making up this letter to you as we go along, and so I only discovered the last part of Alan's letter this very moment. *It's hard to mess up, even when you mess up. Your eggs are overcooked and rumped? Like a shameful blanket. ttxcr oikophobia spring upgathered. zwpastoralized terrifyingly marshy mammas.* Good golly! This DOES sound like the Alan I know. Mr. Confusion Cooker, Mr. Hoaxer Extraordinaire (as the New York Times once called him). I'm filled with excitement and sadness. I met Alan only once several years ago at the Goethe Institute in Amsterdam where he was about to give a talk about his long-lived practice as a prankster, a film-maker, an author and publisher and an all round fun-maker. I miss there not being more Alans in the world and around me. He sent me many a snail mail, and I once smuggled some Cuban cigars to his home in Connecticut (by the way, I do find it appropriate that he lived in Connect-icut—Mr. Avid Connector—and equally appropriate that he was born in Zanesville). I do regret not sending him more cigars before his passing, as he asked on several occasions... I hope he'll forgive me, and I hope wherever he's at they are in abundance.

And so tomorrow is Midsummer's Eve. Yes, I lied, I'm actually writing this letter on Monday, three days past the due date, but hey, sue me! I'm sure Alan would be proud. I'm born on the Walpurgisnacht (also a mini-lie) and apparently the Midsummer's Eve is supposedly equally witchy as the latter. I think this day is also a little bit Alan's day, as he was nothing short of an excellent witch—maybe even a communication witch (or connector witch, which?), a communication mischief expert, a little bit supernatural.

So apparently even a boring scam letter can turn out to be something. I'll make sure to read them more carefully from now onwards, maybe even send a few. I'll also make sure to send out more snail mail, just like I'm writing one to you now.

So where was I...

I'm told this autumn a new MA programme will open at the Estonian Academy of the Arts. It is centred around 'making things public'. I quite like it. I guess I'm also a things-public-maker of sorts (though compared to Alan there's a helluva long way to go), and I'd like to explore this more (maybe with your help?). Sometimes I think it's difficult to balance between making other people's things public and making things public on and of my own. But hey, we're all learning here (by the way, right now, while sitting here in my mother's yard I can hear an ice-cream (*I will have the mocha cheep, with the mocha and the cheep!*<sup>2</sup>—shout out to Andy Kaufman) truck pass by—somehow I think that is an excellent things-public-maker).

This spring, having to reluctantly take on online teaching and the additional occupation of behind-the-curtains (literally) psychologist, I decided we should collectively explore our windows. I was really into all this clapping<sup>3</sup> that was happening all around and thought that's basically all we should be looking into. Deprived of all our physical communication tools, the windows seemed like the last bit of space that could be occupied with personal expression. What a ride that turned out to be—for several weeks we met every Thursday morning on our screens to discuss what each of them had prepared. The outcome was extremely colourful, with piano recitals, window yoga-classes, flags, banners and so and so on springing up like mushrooms; the window space was extended to the elevator, supermarket and pavement (shout out to all my kiddos-and-sort-of friends at the KABK in the Hague).

I miss there being more of this haphazard making things public. Alan took his public-things-making to the streets, books, newspapers, and the TV screen. The messages were mixed, sometimes very straight-forward, and other times more abstract... but what it never was was short of funny.

Dear friend, what a year it's been so far. I'm very proud of you for all your hard work and patience. In September we'll pick up the pieces again, in one form or another, and one location or another. I'll be watching you! And I hope you and me, we'll both make public, funny or not.

Take care, spring upgathered,

X LAURA PAPPA