



MY ONE

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My One,

I write to you with tension in my heart. You invited me to come and stay with you – a kind and good gesture. I was truly touched and surprised that you showed an interest in me. My way of dealing with the world is different to yours, I suppose. When growing up I was surrounded by things that were fixed, old, second-hand, reused, handmade or worn, but always carefully selected. I had never seen a tie before the age of twenty. My first reaction to your invitation was *Why would I?* I must admit I was reluctant at first. I did not trust your invitation. What on earth would this experience add to my life and why do you ask *me* of all people? My suspicion was short-lived though, and grew into trust and gratitude, curiosity and excitement. You actually turned me on. New things excite me at the moment. I'm feeling ready for the *now*, after my life shattered into a billion pieces last year. You looked promising, so I cancelled all my Christmas appointments to come over to you, which resulted in the astonishment of my loved ones. What huge worries come up when you choose to be on your own over Christmas, especially when you mention the word 'work'. I thought only of a new paradise for us to explore, time and space to be together, and I said *yesss*.

There I was, ready for you, excited and looking my best. I hadn't felt so sexy in a long time. I tried to blend in, so you would recognise me better, wearing my newest and neatest clothes. But reflections of me in the shiny surfaces of glass, polished stone, brass, glass and more glass, showed dusty and dirty versions full of faults. There was a strange smell. I was in your space, facing the street, separated from it by glass from floor to ceiling. I was visible to everyone that visits your site or passes on foot, bike, car or bus. So much exposure! You called this a quality because I can show off my stuff, like in a shop window. You have blinds too, controlled with a remote. It made me think of performing a blind-dance, half open, half closed, in pairs, sections moving slowly along conceptual soundscapes, audience in and outside your building, going on for hours.

In the beginning I was very aware of my visibility. I started to paint on the first day, as a kind of undercover activity, to give myself something to do and to make myself look as if I was that sort of artist. I was really still waiting for you. Your advertisements told me I should have felt happy because you are a fully facilitated high-class space. You have everything one could wish for: the Thames as your neighbour, a brand new toilet, a storage space in the garage downstairs, a kitchen, full access 24 hours. I had to poo fairly quickly, but was afraid to do so. Even though it smelled of chlorine

everywhere (do you realise how penetrating your smell is?) I feared the smell of my shit would enter the nostrils of the concierges. They were already unhappy about my presence. To reach your kitchen I had to squeeze behind their two chairs, often blocked by gym and swimming instructors, or a good looking muscular resident wearing a dressing gown with 'I am the greatest' stitched onto the back.

In your space I was sandwiched between the sound of the treadmills and weights bumping on the gym floor upstairs and the chatter and echo from downstairs. That's where the smell came from. From your glassy space I could look into your swimming pool below, through another glass wall within you. I saw you swimming with other residents but you did not let me in there.

There was tension, so much tension in my heart, created by the big differences between you and me, created by the awareness of the distance between us. I could see you, smell you, but received no touch, no appreciation. You did not reach out to me. You looked perfect, groomed, confident and spotless, but felt so empty and lifeless. My patience disappeared and was replaced by anger and many more difficult feelings. I was still waiting for you. Where the hell were you? My anxiety peaked. It was not simply that I felt unwelcome, the situation was much more violent than that. Such disinterest. You didn't care about me. I was invisible to whomever I bumped into, yet so exposed at the same time. I started to feel detached from you, from where I was. The trees and the pavement stared at me with their full emptiness, as did the polished granite benches that got wooden strips added during my stay to protect them from skaters. I started to feel detached from myself too. My ability to think disappeared, and I did not recognise my own hands. I could not create a thing. I was paralysed. I wanted to go home.

Hell, how I hated you. Paying attention always works as a productive strategy for me, connecting and sharing, making friends. But my fear and anxiety made it impossible to do so, they clouded my view. It made me question the purpose of struggling to produce site-responsive art. I had to change my strategy as soon as possible. I decided to ignore you, to get rid of you. You are not yourself. I am not myself either. Where is the true self? Not in my work, not in my playing, not in my living, not in my writing, so where? Judging you caused me pain. I put on a different face, a bleak facade. No talking to anyone, no smiling. Your blinds still violently open. Your glass architecture exposes all but what really matters in a relationship. You force your users into a form of voyeurism that maximises anxiety and fear. You are a gift full of traps - to disobey your rules is fairly easy when you leave

such little creative space for others to manoeuvre in. Not following the rules for the sake of not following the rules never appealed to me as fruitful or attractive, but what the hell am I supposed to do with you, with myself, with us miles apart?

Did you know that you have your TVs in the same position in each of your apartments? I saw it one day when I walked along the Thames to visit you, the front rooms lit up by flickering movements, on all the floors! Thank god they were watching different programmes. I would suggest you change something, your plastic green decorations for example, the ones that are in all the hallways near the lift. Change them for real growing weeds. It will cheer up your residents.

As a relational being I found it hard to keep the 'fuck you all' mask in place. To be honest I forgot about it too soon. I turned inward. The bond between me and myself grew, as if I were befriending myself as *terra incognita* day after day. I saw my own instabilities magnified by the absence of your attention. I wonder if you are able to truly care for yourself.

My mother is on the phone. I can't resist calling her in moments when I feel intensely de-homed. She suggests I just leave you. Her attempt to comfort me is sugary sweet but oh so useless. I ask for it when it is the last thing I need. But it would definitely give me another way of dealing with our tension: to withdraw, give up, back up, fade out, run away and ignore.

Silence. Calm nothing. My paintings scattered on the floor like exotic dead fish in their bowl. No movement. No movement for longer than 20 minutes and your lights turn off. An over-lit Waitrose around the corner. Wind. Reflection of a stranger, friendly masked but miserable concierges ready to welcome everyone 24 hours non-stop.

Let me tell you something. 'Where is your studio?' is a question frequently asked after you graduate as an artist in this city. For a while my answer was 'between Homerton Station and Imperial Wharf, more than 2 hours each day, cheap rent,' referring to the Overground I found myself on to and from my money job. I can't afford a 'real studio' because of you, dear one. But now you have offered yourself to me, so that's at least something. Going to my studio during my time with you meant feeling horribly exposed, pooing in the Waitrose toilets, peeing next to the concierges, the aroma of chloride penetrating my mind, longing to crawl back into the womb. My definition of a studio is a place – wherever – that gives space to creativity and change. My definition of a loving relationship: just repeat the above. But you seem to perform the opposite. I wonder if you have any idea about the discouragement you give to all other life that tries to function outside

your realities. In your words it would probably be formulated as 'fully serviced'. You don't create a place to acclimatise, to feel at home, or at least somewhere to fake some rituals for the self to exist. Bentleys, Mercedes and Porsches instead. Not to say that they aren't nice. I would love to go for a ride with you. But your outer beauty does not allow my inner life to be visible and acceptable. A growing pain inside me. I found relief in the fact that I managed to entertain myself meanwhile, healed by the sound of my own inner whispers, and the belief that I was alone.

A desire to watch hugely projected juicy love-scenes on your white walls in the middle of the night grew in me, visible to every citizen passing by (I still resisted the desire to close your blinds, forcing the exposure upon myself) was replaced by projected moving images of clouds instead – taken from your 17th floor as they pass day by day. Clouds are such democratic balm and heal the soul. Clouds are delicious and sexy. I wish I could say the same of you.

One day your concierge mistakenly changed his short, spiky machine-like answers into a complaint. A sense of connection sparked and gave me a warm feeling inside. He told me of his frustration with your automatic doors, how the wind comes in each time someone entered. Cold and hard wind in all weather conditions, causing a layer of muddy sand on your shiny surfaces brought in from the crazy scale of your ongoing development sites over the road. The mess it creates is my kind of pleasure! He was suffering a constant cold because there was nothing you would do about it. Your selling point is a 'green' one, so you would not allow a heat curtain. But please don't tell anyone about this, otherwise you will fire him. I'm sorry you feel so pessimistic about your customers and employees. How would you want them to be?

I chose to paint on a practical scale. 70 x 100 cm is the largest paper I can carry on my own, and should produce a marketable art product. Paintings sell well you know, they still do. I provided you with commodities for the soul because you are a retail unit after all. Above all the paintings helped me to express the attention that I was paying towards my own attitudes resulting from being with you. Reflecting back society's complexities, as imposed on my individual desires. In my case the paint created the context around my work, a bit like inverse Japanese calligraphy. When you read a story, when you read this letter, the words are the context. The activity of painting allowed me to be with you. The flow of the colours and water on the paper created a context for the words to come out. These white empty paper gaps I left open are for you to fill in.

You seem to tell me that you want to be left alone. Is it because most people in you would want to become rich? I did not start knocking on your doors because you would probably think I wanted the same. I did at one point. If you can't give me any sign of love, then give me what you have plenty of. That is what I thought – your payment was just hilarious in relation to what you pretended to be. But all I actually craved was some connection and joy with you, annagramming my ass off, *money* into *myone*, *Riverlight* into *thrive girl*. *Safe – ty / save – me / save – we*. *Sweet hard. quiet quit*. *Gym – ming. Diff – stance*.

Are you scared of me? It's ok if that's the case. I wish I could reassure you that there is no need to be scared, you can be open and honest with me. I will listen and try to show and share my most vulnerable love. You will have to trust me on this. I'm just trying my best to be with you, even though history is full of fights, mistrust and pessimism between people like us. 'Business', 'bad capitalism' and 'the rich' against 'the arts', 'higher needs' and 'the poor'. I feel strongly that I want to give up any brick walls that might appear inside me. I open windows, many doors, maybe even windows from floor to ceiling like yours. But if you misuse them then there might be no way. If you think I can function as decoration or you want me to entertain you for your benefit, you will find the shutters down and doors locked.

I am more than curious of what can become of us. I crave for a glimpse of your inner life and I'm convinced that there is so much more than the seemingly big difference between you and me. Can you help me to find out what we'd need to change to be able to co-exist? What's perpetuating our distance? Is it the perception of your creator? The vision of he who designed you? The attitudes and tastes of your clientele? The hopes of your users? Is it me that would have to change? Give the ego a second chance, talk to me, my one, and lets do this together.

Love,
Vesta