

Where would I be without you?

When I drew back the curtains I couldn't see out, as there are shutters on the outside made up of wooden slats. There is a mechanism for raising them that is hidden behind the curtain, but it's broken. I check the bedroom, it's the same. I check the bathroom, there is no window. In the kitchen there is a frosted window above the sink. It doesn't open, but along the top there is a small vent. I climb onto the counter to look through, there's no blind, just a wall.

I ring my mother to tell her about the problem and she asks if it was like that when I viewed the flat. I tell her that I think I viewed it at night. She advises that I call the building manager. I ask if she could do this, as I don't like talking on the phone. She calls them, then she calls back. They've disabled the shutters whilst they do maintenance work, it's for the good of the building and it shouldn't take more than a week.

It's been three. I call back. I tell her I need some natural light, as it's not healthy. I tell her to tell whoever that if they don't sort it out soon I'm going to take a hammer and smash holes in the shutters. My mother tells me that would be bad for the building. I tell her this is bad for me. She suggests a SAD lamp.

Another five days pass, I ring again. She tells me they said it would be ready yesterday. Annoyed I reply that it's not. She tells me I've become unhealthily obsessed with the building and encourages me to pay more attention to the city inside my head, as that is where the architecture of possibility resides. I tell her I'll do my best.

Four days later a man comes round to tell me that the problem they were having was due to the varnish. The maintenance team rolled them up too early and its clogged up the mechanism. So now they had to strip it all back and clean out all the sprockets and cogs, which they'd almost done. He apologised for the inconvenience and I told him it was fine, I'd got used to it.

Another week passes and I ring my mother. She tells me I better not be ringing to complain about the blinds, I wasn't, I was just ringing to see how she was. At the end of the conversation she informs me that they'd finished cleaning the mechanisms and they were going to turn the power back on tomorrow. I repeated that that was not why I was ringing.

Three more days pass, I've heard nothing so I've ignored the blinds and got on with other things. At noon the maintenance man comes round to ask if the blinds are working. I tell him I don't know as I've not tried them. He encourages me to give them a go, I tell him I'm too busy.

Another week goes by, my mother calls and asks why I didn't open the shutters for the maintenance man. I tell her I didn't want to, I'd got used to living without natural light. She tells me to stop being silly, as everyone needs natural light. I tell her I have my lamp, even though I didn't actually buy one, but still she seems unconvinced.

Over the next few months various people concerned with the management of the building contact me to ask me to open the blinds. I refuse, I've bought curtains and have employed coloured lighting to create an oasis of calm. My mother tells me my luminous interior sounds unhealthy and that the building management have become suspicious. I tell her that that's their problem.

More months pass and due to unnecessary pressure regarding my tenancy I'm made to agree that someone can come round and test the blinds. A maintenance man arrives for the event, along with my mother. It's the first time she's visited and on entry she wastes no time, going straight for the curtains. Once drawn she turns the small key, a loud clattering noise alerts us that the shutter works, and tantalisingly it slowly moves up to reveal a wall.

I catch a look of concern on my mother's face before we go into the bedroom where the same ceremony ensues. She pulls back the curtains, turns the key and the blind stutters up to reveal yet another almost impossibly close wall. I follow them into the bathroom where there is no window. Finally we arrive in the kitchen where the maintenance man alerts us to an ingenious latch on the inside of the window frame. He releases it and despite me telling him that there really was no need, he slides up the frosted window, to reveal what I already knew.