Lovereading.co.uk

Welcome to the Working Week

Paul Vlitos

Published by Orion

Extract

All text is copyright of the author

This opening extract is exclusive to Love**reading**.
Please print off and read at your leisure.

Batsard

On Sunday at 18:56 Kate Staple wrote:

Dear Martin the Batsard,

I am sending you this at your work account because I know your bitch girlfriend reads your hotmail one and unlike some people I have dignity. I just got your answering phone message. HOW DARE YOU? I knew you were a coward but I never knew how much of a coward you were until now (when I got your message). I am disgusted with you and with myself. Martin you make me sick.

REPLY TO ME.

Love, Kate

p.s. I think I have a disease and I sincerely hope you (and your girlfriend) have it too.
p.p.s. By the way, I did assume you were gay when I met you. So did my friends.

On Monday at 10:07 Kate Staple wrote:

Dear Martin,

Why have you not replied to me? Are you REALLY such a coward? I haven't slept at all (well one hour). I am very upset with you. I'm sorry about what I wrote about your girlfriend. I really need to hear from you. I'm at work now, but I'm checking my hotmail. Please reply to me.

Love, Kate

On Monday at 10:34 Martin Sargent replied:

Dear Kate

Sorry not to reply to you sooner, I was a little late into work this morning due to a bomb scare at Baker Street. I've just got round to reading your messages. I think you meant to send them to Martin Sergeant, who works in the IT department. His email is ms23@mediasolutions.com. I am the other Martin Sargent, ms24@mediasolutions.com. It is a common mistake! Please don't worry about it. I hope you and Martin reach an amicable agreement.

Best Wishes

Martin Sargent

P.S. I'm sorry to hear about your disease.

P.P.S. We all assumed Martin was gay at first as well. I think it's those glasses.

Offer of a Lifetime

On Monday at 13:32 Martin Sargent wrote:

Hello all

Due to an unforeseen domestic rearrangement, there is a room available to rent if anyone is interested. If you are looking for a place to live (or know someone who is) please get in touch. This should not be taken as an excuse to offload your undesirable flatmate/lover on me. The details are as follows:

The flat: damp, mysterious odour, dark. Close to train line. Enigmatic boiler provides tepid water almost on demand.

The location: Kensal Green, NW 11 (Zone 2)

Why not take advantage of a limited period offer to experience this part of London before it's gentrified?

A twenty-minute walk to the tube takes you past the local amenities: closed public baths, semi-closed library (wide selection of work-out DVDs and large-print books), over-priced 24-hour shop, crap video shop, one halal butcher's, two dodgy pubs, one shiny new curry palace, 4 posters about gun crime, 3 appeals for witnesses.

Experience the vibrant multiculturalism of contemporary London at first hand. Listen as the schoolkids banter playfully with Mr Singh, our local shopkeeper. See them pocket Twix bars when he isn't looking. Shrug as they stare you out. Hear domestic disputes in five mellifluous languages. Smile with pride as our local lads comment appreciatively on your bike. Meet our fashionably diverse local crew of derelicts. There is also some brilliant if baffling graffiti: 'Love is for Suckers', 'I Hate Your Dog' and 'Sit on it' are my personal favourites.

Celebrity local residents include Isambard Kingdom Brunel, celebrity chef Alexis Soyer and Anthony Trollope. Apart from

the world-famous cemetery, Kensal Green shops also boasts one of London's few surviving Victorian public toilets, featuring elegant tiling and a tasteful pseudo-classical portico. Make use of it now before it is converted into a desirable flat.

Don't delay. Every month the health-food shops and gastropubs of Queen's Park are creeping west. The first skips of spring have appeared in the road already. Soon the sights, smells, and noises of this lively part of London will be transformed for ever.

The occupant: moody, newly single smoker, 25. Dislikes job. No hobbies. Casual about housework. But not too casual…

Should interest: sociologist looking for area-study; exiled dictator looking for somewhere quiet to hide out; language student; trainspotter; graffitologist.

Please do not apply if any of the following words describes you: zany; bubbly; fussy; spiritual; kleptomaniac.

Rent: extortionate.

I anticipate great demand, so please pass the word around without delay.

Martin

A Jesus-shaped Hole

On Monday at 13:05 Martin Sargent wrote:

Hi Mum

Writing to say thanks for the parcel. I think the jumper is actually Dad's, but tell him I'll take good care of it. The book looks very interesting, and I look forward to getting the chance to read it. Hope is all well with you. I'm not sure about the weekend yet.

Lots of Love

Martin

On Monday at 13:10 Martin Sargent wrote:

Hey Sis

Hope term is going OK, and that life in Hall is still treating you well. I take it you're getting leaned on to go home this weekend as well? On the subject of which, I got the most extraordinary parcel from the Mum this morning. She sent me one of Dad's jumpers (that piece of foolery with the leather elbow-pads that makes him look like a retired general) under the insane misapprehension that it belongs to me. I also got a book titled *Is There a Jesus-shaped Hole in Your Life?*. I wasn't aware of it, though I am strongly conscious of a Sally-shaped hole in my love-life and a TV-and-video-shaped hole in my living room. On which note, do mention to that next-door neighbour of yours that I am now single. Speak tonight about weekend?

Love

Martin

P.S. I'm thinking of growing a moustache. Any suggestions for shape?

On Tuesday at 00:25 Lucy Sargent replied:

Hi, Martin,

In computer room at college, checking messages after night out. Mmm, chips are good. Very sorry again to hear about you and Sally (and about your TV). Next-door neighbour is here (her name is Miriam, by the way) and says Hi, but I think she has a boyfriend. Also, don't be a perve. Thought you were supposed to be heartbroken?

So I guess we won't speak tonight about weekend, but I think I may make an appearance on Sunday. Surprising how fast an allowance can go, isn't it? Last time I saw that jumper Lady was sleeping on it, so I would give it a wash if I was you.

Love,
Lucy

PS: I would advise against moustache of any description. Miriam agrees. How about a Jesus-shaped beard? (Shape of Jesus' beard, not beard in shape of Messiah obviously.) Will await further developments, and maybe see you at weekend?

On Thursday at 13:57 Martin Sargent wrote:

Hi Sis

Dad rang last night, so clearly there is a three-line whip as regards Sunday's family festivities. I'm still not quite clear why this weekend of all possible weekends we have to gather the clan. It's not that I have anything better lined up, more that almost anything else I can think of to do would be more fun than being at home. Apparently there's a big pile of my old shirts waiting for me to go through them and decide which ones I want to keep and which ones can go to the jumble. To be perfectly honest,

since I haven't worn a single one of those shirts for almost a decade, I probably wouldn't have missed any of them. I'm also unconvinced that it's a giant parental vote of confidence in me that they have kept my Sainsbury's uniform 'in case I need it again'.

I told Dad I'll be down Saturday morning, but I'll have to get away sharpish after lunch on Sunday. Sally's coming round Sunday evening to return some things she has decided she doesn't want and to steal some more of my stuff. I hope you've recovered from Monday night, and I'm sorry to hear that Miriam has a boyfriend. Is he better-looking than me? Is he taller? Is he tougher?

Wow, that book Mum gave me has really changed my life. I will give it to you at the weekend. I have abandoned the moustache idea and decided to give my life to God. As most of my worldly possessions are now in Sally's new flat, I'm already at an advantage as regards renouncing them. I have decided to forgive everyone. Can't wait to tell Mum the good news.
Love
Martin

On Friday at 16:52 Lucy Sargent replied:

Dear St Martin,

Yeah, right, you gaylord.

By the way, I met Miriam's boyfriend Frank last night (and over breakfast). As he is a large rugby-playing man, I would avoid tangling with him. Although, interestingly, he has a beard. The shape of it defies description somewhat, as it's hard to tell where the beard ends and the neck acne begins. Rather perverse I would have thought to have a beard AND shaving rash. Not a look I recommend you go for.

See you Saturday – presumably this means you'll be accompanying Mum to church on Sunday?

Love,
Lucy

David

On Monday at 11:35 Martin Sargent wrote:

Hi Lucy

Good to see you at the weekend. Very kind of you to suggest I wear my 'new' jumper to church on Sunday. And I still maintain the vicar was sniggering at my stupid elbow-pads. Possibly because I kept slipping off the communion rail.

Well, the plot thickens with Sally. As expected she turned up to pick up a few (more) things - she rather absurdly accused me of hoarding some of her underwear (which I hadn't, of course).

Not that she turned up alone. Her friend David gave her a lift over. Very kind of him. You may remember him from Sally's and my last party (which I didn't realise at the time would be our *last* party). He was ambushing people in the hall and handing out flyers for his play. As I recall he was outfitted in tapered combat trousers, a white shirt and a waistcoat Ali Baba would have rejected as being a bit 'busy'. He ends, abruptly, about five feet from the ground, in an explosion of ginger hair. Like a rather disappointing firework. I didn't see his car, but I imagine it looking like the Noddymobile.

This is NOT how it happens. I don't get dumped for David. David is the guy who gets dumped at the end when Sally realises who she really loves. He ends up falling in a duck-pond or getting a ton of manure dumped on him. He could be played by Tom Hollander in a ginger wig.

Mild revenge: I managed to slip *Is There a Jesus-Shaped Hole in Your Life?* into a box of books I was helping pack for Sally.

She sends her love, by the way.

Love

Martin

On Monday at 12:45 Lucy Sargent replied:

Poor Martin!

So sorry to hear about all that. I do recall David. Physically, he's more how Mackenzie Crook would look playing Malcolm McLaren. But that's not his fault. We discussed his life and works at length in the hall while he tried to peer down my top. Alas for him he was too short and he's not really my type. On the subject of casting, he told me I had the perfect face to play Lizzie Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*. He'd make a great Mr Collins. Are you sure Sally and he are a thing? Perhaps he has hypnotic powers. Or perhaps you really pissed her off …

The jumper looked pretty good, actually. We discovered you had accidentally left it after I dropped you at the station. In fact, you'd left it right at the back of your cupboard, stuffed behind a bag full of plastic dinosaurs. It was very lucky for you that Mum found it. Auntie Jean came round and we were looking for your school photo.

Take care of yourself, and for god's sake shave that monstrosity on your top lip off before you see Sally again. Send her my regards when you see her.

Love,
Lucy

PS: Someone was insisting to me the other day that ginger is the new blonde. I can't remember who it was now. Possibly Mick Hucknall.

Moustache

On Monday at 17:58 Elizabeth Sargent wrote:

Hi, Martin,

Hope things went well (or at least as well as they could in the circumstances) with Sally last night. We found after you had gone that you had left your jumper! Will send it on. I don't suppose you want your old plastic dinosaurs. By the way, whatever happened to your old school photo? I wanted to show it to Auntie Jean. I'll look forward to hearing what you *really* thought of the book. Make sure to look after yourself. Life goes on, you know.

Love,

Mum

PS: Sorry to have to tell you but Lady has cancer again.

PPS: Darling, you know that wherever you go and whatever you do your father and I will always love and support you. But we do think that moustache is something of an error.

Offer of a Lifetime

On Tuesday at 9:54 Barney wrote:

Alright mate,

Long time and all that. Got your email about the flat. Afraid I am already installed with Uni mates in Balham. Not sure if you knew I was in London? Quite a few of the guys from school live around here actually. Shall I see if any of them are looking to move? Flat sounds pretty attractive. As for the company… That's you, right? Doesn't sound like you have changed much from school (except you weren't 25 at school). By the way, it might be worth thinking about making the advert more positive if you are serious about getting someone to move in.

It would be good to meet up, wouldn't it? Give me a ring (mobile still the same) if you are free over the weekend.

By the way, if you are free Saturday, I'm DJing in a bar up your way. I'll put you on the guestlist if you fancy it. Would be good to get a few friendly faces in the crowd… (Details attached)
Laters, Maters,
Barney

Saturdays @ Bar Loco
"It's Loco Time!"
15 Victoria Street
Tube: Royal Oak/Warwick Avenue
Pitchers £7.50 till 10 Shooters £3
After 7.30: £5 on the door; £4 w/flyer
No Trainers
Sounds by DJ Barney

On Tuesday at 10:15 Sally wrote:

Dear Martin,

I don't think you meant to include me on that mailing-list? Good luck with finding someone quickly. I have put the cheque for last month's electricity in the post. It was nice to see you the other day. Hope things OK with you. Speak soon, Perhaps we could go out for a drink sometime?

Warmest regards,

Sally

On Tuesday at 10:17 Martin wrote:

Dear Sally

No, I meant to put you on the list. Thanks for sending the cheque on. I miss you. As regards that pint, an old mate is DJing at a bar not far from me on Saturday - he's offered to put us on the guestlist. It's Barney from school, but the bar's alright.

Love

Martin

P.S. 'Warmest regards'?!?!?

At 16:59 on Tuesday Sally replied:

Dear Martin,

Sounds great! I'll have to come straight from rehearsal. Do you think you could put David on the list as well? I'm glad things are cool between us. See you then.

Lots of love

Sally

PS - By the way, David really likes the moustache. If that's what that thing is supposed to be.

Re: Offer of a Lifetime

At 11:21 on Friday Martin Sergeant wrote:

Dear Martin (!),

Hi, this is Martin Sergeant (in IT). Rumour has it you're looking for a flatmate? I was wondering if you could send me the details? I've recently started looking for somewhere to live myself, so perhaps if I catch you at lunch we could discuss it?

Best,

Martin Sergeant (not you!!!)

At 11:37 on Friday Martin Sargent replied:

Hi Martin

Not sure yet, but I think the room might be taken. Thanks for your interest, look forward to discussing it with you.
See you at lunch
Martin

At 11:40 on Friday Martin Sargent wrote:

Hi Laura

How's things down in production? Don't suppose you know who's been spreading the word that I'm looking for a housemate? More to the point, how does Martin Sargent know about it? I just wondered if you had mentioned it. Otherwise, I wonder whether he is monitoring my emails? In which case, 'Hi Martin'. Want to go out (for sandwiches) this lunchtime?

Still no luck finding anyone to move in, by the way…

Let me know about lunch.
Martin

At 11:52 on Friday Laura replied:

Martin,

No idea how the other MS heard about it, since I hadn't heard. Slightly hurt, in fact, that you didn't ask me. I have a 'working' 'lunch', so looks like fish and chips with your namesake for you. By the way, if you're so desperate for a housemate, what's wrong with Martin? I trust it's not prejudice.

Soon,

Laura

At 12:04 on Friday Martin replied:

Laura

You will note I topped your flirty 12-minute response time with a nonchalant 14 minutes. My reasons for not wanting to live with Martin have nothing to do with his orientation (he's not, by the way). Firstly, I have it on good authority he is a batsard, and may well be diseased (in an unspecific but unpleasant way). Second, I don't want to live with anyone from work. Third, he is the kind of person who reads magazines. And not on the train.

Of course, I thought of you as a flatmate immediately. But: 1) See reason two above, and 2) I may have other plans for you. How soon?
Martin

At 14:45 on Friday Laura replied:

Martin,

Two hours and forty-one minutes. Beat that! Look forward to

hearing about your battered cod with Martin. Also about your surprising grasp of his medical history.

'Other plans' sounds a bit sinister. Free this weekend.

Laura

At 16:55 on Friday Martin replied:

Laura

Only two hours ten, but it's time to go home. Genuinely busy this weekend. You're obviously a popular girl.

Have a good one.

Martin

P.S. I'm very heartbroken and vulnerable at the moment.

At 16:59 on Friday Laura replied:

Yes, I heard about the break-up. I'm sorry about that, and it's obviously very sad, but can I ask one question? Were her parting words 'Either me or that moustache has to go?' If they were I'm afraid to say I think you may have made the wrong choice.

At 17:02 on Friday Martin replied:

OK, OK, I get the message. I fact I got the message last night when a gang of kids behind me on the bus started singing 'macho, macho man.' I suspect they were being ironic.

Re: David

On Sunday at 18:34 Barney wrote:

Alright Mate,

Thanks for coming last night. I hope you had a good time. It was good of so many people to turn up. Sorry about the muck-up with the guestlist. I'd love to know what you thought of my set. They cut me a bit short, actually, and they were a bit funny about some of the stuff I played, but everyone I spoke to was really encouraging.

I was wondering if you could let me have your mate David's email? We were talking about my maybe doing the music for a play he's directing, and I wanted to follow it up. He seems like a really chilled guy.

Cheers, Ears,

Barney
