

Another Open Curtain

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The curtains were wide open but we were too far gone to care. It was the fifteenth floor but it felt like the thousandth. Toys, restraints and leather gear littered the floor: evidence that the first few hours were spectacular.

The magic, however, had died.

The apartment was one of those expensive ultra-modern shoeboxes. I was lounging in the living room, naked and horny as a school boy but no stamina below the waist to do anything about it.

I lit up the glass pipe and slid it between my lips, letting the narcotic take me to places I felt I needed to go. I put it back on the coffee table and it sat there until he had a drag. His name wasn't important enough to remember. I knew him as "Grindr" hook-up – "open2pozibilities" (no "fats", no "fems", "masc4masc", "PNP" okay, hosting now).

He sat close, speaking some banter about his life he'd only tell a stranger in the state he was in. I pretended to show interest, distracted by the porn that was blaring from the TV; angry that what I came there to do wasn't what we were doing; desperate to do the things I wanted to do but too afraid to show it.

Coming to the conclusion that we were both too wired to fuck one another, I waited until there was a break in the conversation. I sped things along with short answer responses like "I still live at home", "I'm still studying at uni" and "I don't have a boyfriend". Once there was a break, I sharply said, 'that's very interesting – I need to go out for a cigarette.'

Without waiting for a response, I slipped my underwear on and went out to the terrace with my smokes. I took my phone as well, hiding it in my jocks between my cock and the fabric. The air was cool but tolerable and I lit up, pulling my phone out of my jocks, giving myself a hopeful tug while I did it.

Ambitious of sloppy seconds, I boomed up "Grindr", speaking with guys who either wanted coffee first or guys who couldn't meet until later. One hundred futile messages later, I tucked the phone back in my jocks. Oxford Street was quiet, in spite of the nightclubs, cars and random sirens. Up at the railing, the light from the apartments across the way caught my eye.

Curtains were open and lights were on. Windows into the underbelly of Sydney.

Spouses were fighting and spouses were fucking.

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Lovers were making and druggers were taking.

Druggers were dealing and dreamers were dreaming.

I saw lives and secrets that weren't mine to know unfolding before me and I was buzzing with a new high, finding pleasure in the sneaky voyeurism of it all. I wanted to see more, know more and be there, growing envious of what they had: an exposure I would never have. It was a strange kind of jealousy. For my secrets were mine alone – always the watcher, never the watched and with all my lies and my secrets I never felt weaker.

*Those never closed have nothing to lose*, I thought, feeling a buzzing in my briefs. It woke me up a bit. *A sloppy second – probably*. I reached in to grab the phone as I flicked the cigarette away. Text messages – not grindr.

The first, from Mum: “hope the movie was good. Have a good night at your friends place. Love you.”

The second, from Boyfriend: “hope you're having a good night at your Mum and dad's. Can't wait to see you tomorrow. Sleep well. Love you.”

Looking at the messages, my body froze. Not from the drugs or the cool air but from the paranoia that they could see me, could see what I was doing and could judge me like the people I was judging from the balcony. Just like that, I felt exposed. Not watched in the way I desired but none the less, open for all to see. Just another open curtain on a choir of Earthly stars.