



To whomever, if the following does not pertain to you please stop reading. I am away from my offices for the rest of the future with little or no internet access.

To the man with the pink bougainvillea in his buttonhole on the steps outside:

This time yesterday I was yet to collect from the clear bay-bottom the conch shell that forms the centrepiece of my outfit, guided by the lissom and abbreviated forms of local divers. As I yanked away my goggles and heaved onto the wooden pier, the director informed me of our impending departure, and a jeep pulled up in a flourish of dust to take us to the island's one-strip airport, where we boarded the next available flight – nine and a half hours of stomachless gliding, during which I read the last half of Honoré de Balzac's *Lost Illusions* and then took online personality tests until my battery died, when we all stopped what we were doing to watch a storm sparking below us from the tiny windows, its sickness of flashes and smoke like watching a party from a balcony... not this kind of party. Once we touched down, we taxi'd through the city to the one train service that still runs a fully functioning dining carriage, and I ate a magnificent half-lobster then a slice of baked cheesecake while the darkened countryside passed without meaning or consequence, arriving here at twenty minutes to midnight, when I saw you on the steps, on the marble steps outside, shooting you a look, my entourage palming you a cream-coloured business card in the hope that you'd find me, in the fern room, under a green light, looking at something virtual. You know, the pictures don't do you justice, and despite the venom of our earlier correspondence all the antipathy melted away at first sight. If this is a poem, like every arrival it's a story of departure. If it is a letter, it's like something discarded on the floor inside a painting. If this is a request, it's evidence of its origins, which are plain and heartfelt. If this is a receipt, it is the notice of its hopelessness. If it is a list, it doesn't know when to stop listing. If this is a missed connection or a placeholder in disguise, I'll only know when you say hello, if you took a while, it's fine.¹

¹ Sam Riviere is the author of *81 Austerities* (2012), *Standard Twin Fantasy* (2014) and *Kim Kardashian's Marriage* (2015).