



Thirty minutes is a long time to wait outside an elevator with a bin, so I rode up and down with any stranger who smiled at me. I was freaking out. I wanted to get my flight and not miss the last train. So, I got into the elevator with them, and like a baby bird asked, ‘Are you my mummy?’ A kindly, liver-spotted gent with a big smile said no, but that he’d help in any way he could, which nearly made me cry. He was who I needed to see at that exact moment.

When the manager arrived, he told me my apartment was the nicest in the building. As we reached the door, he unlocked the first lock—which wasn’t locked—then said, ‘I don’t have the key for this other lock.’ I asked if I still had to pay him, to which he replied, ‘Yes,’ and, ‘This is the only apartment in the entire building I don’t have the keys for.’ I said, ‘Mmm,’ straining the words from my guts, and bent over. He asked if I was okay. I smiled and said, ‘Fine.’ Before he left, he said I could at least leave my bin here, which was the \$100 insight I needed, because I would have taken it with me. I’d already begun planning how I’d carry it on the train. I had so few possessions available to me I didn’t want to lose anything else. Even when he said, ‘You can leave it right there,’ I pointed, ‘Here?’ and it took a moment for my hand to comply.

The tinkle of a million keys except for the one I needed followed the manager's heavy steps. I rang people who went to the coast regularly. After learning they were already there, I abruptly hung up. Even in crisis, I was stubborn, not explaining the situation to my male friends. I was too vulnerable. I knew they’d drop everything, and I didn’t want to allow them to come to my rescue. It would have made me feel like I owed them something—like my body—or worse… put myself in a situation where I felt inclined to like them in ways they actually wanted me to reciprocate. Resting my forehead against the door, I tried to use the peephole to look at my luggage one last time, but it only reflected the locked doors around me before I slumped down to the welcome mat.

