

## Solitude

An essay for a play by Sonia Ramos

This is the way it has always been. Open up wide, send the invitation out, let everyone in so close, and then, as soon as there is a real chance of a connection, of understanding, even just for one night, close the shell tight. Stand off, shut out.

The need is there to open up, a compulsion that will not be denied, but the fear of a real soul bonding, of being touched inside, is like a knee-jerk reaction. It can't be avoided, even when I consciously try to smother the urge, my subconscious won't let me.

So, how to ever get near to anyone?

One way is to create impossible situations. This works. You can let anyone in if you know it is going nowhere. Long distance relationships are fine, the mind gets involved, and that's a release, but the relationship isn't going anywhere without some physical contact. And that fits the bill. No emotional attachment, kept my solitude.

Unsuitable partners, the more unsuitable the better. That won't last long. Perfect, on my own.

Anyone from far away who has a return ticket already booked. No risk, see? With an expiry date set I can relax, my separateness not endangered.

Internet relationships? Ideal.

In fact, any impossible situation will do. I'm sure you can think of a few yourself. I spend my time inventing them.

Sometimes I get it wrong, of course. Too many drinks and the guard comes down. A drunken kiss exchanged and the day after I'm desperately trying to wind it back. Even while I desperately don't want to.

Or, at work I suddenly realise that a friendly working relationship has turned into something else, without having meant it to happen. A warm smile exchanged in the coffee corner, too many confidences shared, and all of a sudden I'm in reverse gear again, an involuntary, instinctive reaction. The conflict between what I do, and what I think I want, makes me tremble.

Another way, more complicated, more risky:

When we first went out together you said to me "You're only with me because you can't find anyone better."

I thought you were the best, smartest, kindest person I could find, and you thought that I was slumming. In that moment I knew that you were right for me, because there was no understanding between us. I could open up to you as much as I wanted, needed, and it would be OK, there would never be a real union. I could undress my soul in front of you and it wouldn't mean a thing. No risk.

I gave myself to you completely and it was as if nothing had happened.

And it worked, for a while. But in the end, it wasn't enough. It was just another impossible situation.

And now?

The need to open up is there, stronger than ever. And I am alone.