

# Alnura Belyalova

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My Dear Unknown Reader,

I am writing this letter to you in hopes that maybe, just maybe my story will resonate with you. I would not dare to ask for your understanding, but if what is written below sparks some emotion, then I did not waste my time.

To give this letter some context and make me a little bit more than a stranger to you, I would like to mention some information about myself. I am twenty years old and I am from the biggest country in this world (not to be too braggy) – Russian

Federation, or at least that's what my passport says. I am sure at this point you might already be depicting some vague portrait of myself; to make this process a little bit more intriguing, let's add some more facts. I was born in 1997, in Kazakhstan, a country that has just about proclaimed its sovereignty after being a part of the USSR for almost 70 years. When I reached that age when fairy tales still were my reality, my family moved to Russia and I called this place my home ever since...

Seems quite straightforward, doesn't it? Well, if so, I have another surprise up my sleeve for you, my Dear Unknown Reader. As I graduated from high school, my family decided to move to Spain (I guess we just wanted more sun?) and I had a pleasure to integrate into a completely different environment. Feeling inspired and confident enough, I decided to try my luck and relocate to one of the biggest and multicultural educational hubs in the world – London. After numerous sleepless nights, a daily dosage of coffee and constant efforts to do my best, I became a proud student of Cass Business School.

So here I was, a seventeen-year-old girl with unbelievably high expectations and colourful dreams all on my own in a different country. I had an insane journey ahead of me that would be full of new knowledge, new friendships, new relationships and some drama of course (we can't go without it); but most importantly I was about to go on a journey of self-discovery that if did not change me completely, it definitely shaped who I am today.

During the first introductory meeting, our Course Officer started speaking about the holidays schedule and it would not really attract more of my attention than usual, except he mentioned something along the lines of "although, Cass Business School understands that the orthodox church has Christmas on a different date, all the students would have to come back at the same time to start the second term". What impressed me so much about this, you ask, My Dear Reader? Well, for the first time I have heard a representative of a different culture to if not apologise, but at least show his awareness of other cultures at an organisational level. From that moment onwards I have submerged into an exceptionally inclusive and accepting environment, where your diversity was not ignored, but embraced. Did that feel good? Well for a person who has a book to write to answer a simple question of "Where are you from?"- yes, it felt ecstatic.

This amazing atmosphere could be sensed at any social gathering too, which was a real – life proof that it was not imposed by our University, but accepted and celebrated by all of us. At just one event I met people from UK, Russia, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Morocco, Romania, Italy, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Ukraine, Spain and I am sure that the list can go on and I just did not have the chance to meet literally everyone. So, My Dear Unknown Reader, this is how I started to learn about different cultures, traditions, norms and customs. Even though I lived in different countries before, I have finally understood how can one situation or problem have different perspectives – a skill that has stayed and benefited me ever since.

My Dear Reader, you might be thinking that I was one lucky person to have such a positive experience? And yes, I was and still am, but like any story always a different side, so does mine. That "other side" started to emerge when I started to apply for different internship opportunities and as part of that process I have learnt a lot about what it meant to be a foreigner applying for work in the UK. To put it simply, it means that you cannot afford to be



just good or just great; you need to be a million times better than other applicants. Why? Because you don't only need to prove that you can bring some value to the company by fulfilling your role, you need to prove that you will be able to compensate the company for investing in you, more specifically your visa. Sounds tough? It is.

My Dear Unknown Reader, I would not want to burden you with a very lengthy letter, so I think I will finish here. My verdict? I have experienced a whole roller coaster of emotions: I found what I would call a second (or a third or fourth?) home in London, but I guess when it comes to money, some diversity is not particularly welcomed.

With Best Wishes, A Nomad