



Monday 20th April 2015

Dear Customer,

I settled down with a cup of tea to watch the weather forecast. London 25 C.....Richmond 9 C. That was the other day. Today it has reached 13 C but it feels warmer and it is glorious and sunny with the spring flowers in full bloom.

I am struggling a little with a bad headache so this is brief. The Garden Centre is taking its toll on my nerves. The joiners have disappeared to do a roof and heaven knows when they will be back. The electrician is on a new housing estate and isn't sure when he can start – maybe the odd hour here and there. The flooring is going to cost twice as much as I'd expected – 300sq metres – which all needs 'screeding' before the vinyl can go down apparently. Furniture and cooking equipment from all over the country is arriving daily and is being stored in the polytunnel. Everything outside has been demolished and skip after skip is taking it all away leaving me with a vast expanse of gravel car park. I have divided things into stage 1 – the things I need to do to open and stage 2 – the things I'd like to do as soon as I can afford it, including landscaping the car park.

But now I have the terrors – will anyone come in when we open. There is absolutely no way of knowing. So in terms of what staff I take on in the café – that is very difficult. One thing I know is that we can't afford to employ people to twiddle their thumbs. Bang go the zero hours contracts just when I need them. If only you could see it, you would see how far up to my neck I am with it. If we don't have any customers I will be reasonably stuffed.

Oh well, have just had an email pop up – Izzy Lane has won an award for 'Best Ethical Style' – that's something I guess. I'll celebrate, will go and put the kettle on and have a digestive biscuit.

I have some 20 of my sheep in the paddock next to me – the halal lambs, last years rescued Wensleydale lambs and Barney, my orphan lamb, now 9, but still a toddler. I need to have him close-by now he's getting on a bit. If anything happened to him I'd be devastated. The others are 5 miles away in Harmby. I went up to see them all yesterday and as I approached the farm, to my horror a baby duckling was coming straight down the middle of the road towards me on its own quacking in panic. I stopped the car, put my hazard lights on and followed it. I flagged down cars coming from both directions and gesticulated, pointed at it 'duckling, duckling' I said. I couldn't leave it so picked it up and went back to the car – I had visions of taking it home, what would I feed it etc. It was so sweet and it sat on my lap while I parked properly then we set off on foot to try and find its family. To my amazement I found them in a tiny stream, immediately adjacent to the road - the mother and 12 ducklings. I was so relieved. I popped her into the stream with them, stood right back and watched them a while. Mummy duck decided she would come out of the stream and go back up the middle of the busy road with her flock of ducklings following her – they couldn't have been more than a day old. Thank God she changed her mind and went back into the stream and I had to make a quick getaway as the stress of seeing them all go up the road would have been too much.

Please excuse the brevity - I've increased the font size to try and fill the page up.

Hope you enjoy your vegetable bags,

Kindest wishes,

Isobel