

THE MANY LAYERS OF WHO WE ARE

Billy Chiebuka Obi-Eke

Dear Ms Onion,

I apologise for my imposition. I apologise for my persistent tugging at your skin—poking your shell with sharp objects like flattery and false promises, hoping that I see through the outermost layer at least.

I am astonished by your purple coat often mistaken for red, on top of the second coat, on top a couple more.

I wonder if all those layers ever feel like a burden or whether they're only masks on masks on masks hiding what vast mysteries lie beneath.

Is it armour? Is it a shield—fortified defences built up to guard your fragility?

Is it a weapon? Is it a promise to never let anything or anyone get too close to uncover or reopen old wounds?

I come with good intentions.

Yes, I intend to peel; I humbly appeal to let me in, but on your own accord.

I don't come with knives or shears, to tear down walls but I hope I can build a door to walk through, or a window to peer through.

And one day, when the world feels safer, I'd like to come into your safe space—your innermost layer, wherever that is.

With love,
Mr Cabbage.

Dear Mr Cabbage,

With all due respect, who do you think you are to make comments about my layers? How dare you talk about walls when you have fences? Your defences, more fortified than Rome right before the Trojan invasion.

But I'm no Trojan—I don't intend to contend for an invitation.

You're a pot calling a frying pan black, when you're the one with heavier burdens on your back.

I can't even tell if you're green or white or a mixture of both. Make up your mind!

Oh, you're often purple, too? Never mind.

And why do you look so much like lettuce? Do you have an identity crisis? Do you not like who you are?

I'm sorry. I'm sorry for my tone. I've been told I make men cry; it's never been my intention, but it helps get rid of the attention.

Like you said, sir, the world isn't safe, that's why I have systems in place to chase away curious men with knives.

But for you... I'll think about it.

Yours sincerely,
Ms Onion.