

Letters (To You)

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ENG 226

23 February 2006

June 24, 2003

To the Boy who Walked Out of my Life Today,

“And I think it would be better if we didn’t talk anymore.”

For a brief moment, my pulse halted and my breath caught in my throat. The digital clock glowed 10:27 P.M. I traced and retraced the gleaming green numbers with my eyes, too abashed to respond. As if on cue, the bleeping of your cell phone interrupted our awkward silence. You hastily snatched up the phone from the dashboard and answered on the first ring. I didn’t have to see the caller ID to know who was calling; I could hear her voice screeching through your phone’s plastic casing.

“I won’t keep you,” I said, my voice barely audible. I reached for the door handle and climbed out of the red minivan, closing the door without turning around. The driveway still radiated heat from the summer sun, and bits of gravel stuck to the bottoms of my bare feet. Part of me knew this would be the last time I walked away from you.

Struggling to keep my shoulders from quaking, I held my head high as I strode up the driveway.

I arrived at the backdoor and stabbed the button that would lower the garage door, severing me from you. The moment I left your prying eyes and entered the safety of my house, I lost all composure. Huge, tearless sobs wracked my body as I realized the magnitude of the situation: I had lost someone who meant the world to me. As I climbed the thirteen stairs leading to my room, my feet plodded heavier with each step. I flopped facedown on my bed, pushing the blinds of my window to one side so that I

could peer out into the night. To my surprise, you were still parked in the driveway, seemingly torn between staying and leaving. Then your headlights blinked on and swept silently away into the dark horizon. The glow of the lighted dashboard illuminated your face, creating a haunting silhouette. I knew you wouldn't be coming back.

I flipped over to lie on my back and stared up at the ceiling. I didn't realize I was crying until the painted flowers on my walls blurred and ran together into big, cascading pools of purple, blue, and turquoise. Your words from our fatally final conversation burned themselves into my mind, words like self-centered and naïve. But the phrase that stuck out the most repeated itself over and over, creating an anthem: "You are not the kind of person I want to be friends with." Which led me to wonder...what kind of person *am* I?

**From,
Me.**



July 19, 2003

To the Boy who Brought Another Girl to my Show,

Two nights ago (Friday) you brought her with you to the Red Door Club. By the time you arrived, the girls and I were already getting ready to go on.

My satin top clung to my body, feathers sticking to the sweat that had collected on my shoulder blades. In my dreams, I sweat starlight; my drumming heals wounds

and makes animals dance. I have a tangled rat's nest of curls for hair, and I wear a pair of feathered wings when I play the drums. In my dreams, I am also obsessed with pain: I cut out newspaper articles about death and destruction and plaster them all over my dream bedroom walls. During wakefulness, I am not obsessed with pain, but sometimes I feel overcome with it. Friday night I felt like my dream self.

My bandmates waited with me behind the thick curtain, all three of us exuding beauty. Even in the dim half lit backstage, Whitney's electrifying blonde hair glowed as if ultraviolet rays illuminated it. Amy's large, alert eyes darted around in anticipation, and a vibrant shade of hot pink wove its way through her dark hair. Like all of the rock star goddesses on television and in magazines, they were tall and lanky. I felt tiny and frail next to them, my huge black wings dwarfing my small frame. As I slumped against the concrete wall offstage, I imagined I was one with the cool surface.

"Don't worry, you're going to be great." My friend Jeff suddenly appeared behind me. "Go out there and dedicate your song to him," he said, squeezing my arm reassuringly, but I barely heard him. My heart was pounding in my forehead. By the time I managed to choke out, "Okay," Jeff was already gone.

Amy glanced over at me and immediately sensed what was wrong. She came over and took my chin in her hands until I lifted my gaze to meet hers. "Look at me," she pleaded. "Stop letting him affect you like this. He is not worth your tears." Hot salty drops stung my eyes and threatened to spill over as Amy gathered me into a hug. I was not going to let myself cry.

I sat down behind my drums and stared at them as if they were foreign objects. The sleek burgundy toms gleamed with a strange and unfamiliar glow. The cymbals shined with all the light that had vanished from my eyes. I remembered how before my band's other gigs, he would come up to me before we played and place the sticks in my hands. Then he would lean down, kiss my cheek, and whisper, "Don't just hit the wooden shells with your sticks. Without you, the drums are nothing; you have to play what you feel inside." But now he was gone, and no one was there to hand me my sticks and repeat his advice to me. How was I supposed to play when I felt like nothing inside?

The opening band struck the final chord of their last song. The notes echoed, reverberating until all that remained of the pitches was edgy feedback. I cringed, not only because the scratchy sound pierced my ears, but because the moment I was dreading had finally arrived. Cautiously, as if approaching a wounded animal, Whitney slunk up behind me and gently tapped me on the shoulder. "We're on," she whispered. My heart fluttered as if it had wings of its own. I didn't feel like playing my drums just then: I felt like hiding behind them.

The curtain swept open, and Amy and Whitney glanced at me expectantly. Suddenly, the blood that had been coursing hot through my veins all night ran ice cold. "This song goes out to someone I care about." I barely recognized my shaky voice as it crackled through the microphone. I didn't dare say your name because I knew that if I did, you would only laugh and shake your head.

The opening guitar riff blared out of the giant speakers on each side of the stage. The monitor on the floor next to me squealed as the bass line flooded my ears. The drumsticks were slippery with sweat and threatened to fly out of my hands, but I gripped them tightly and kept hanging on. As I struggled to keep the beat steady, the tempo I produced was slightly erratic. I sang my first verse and my voice started off rattly and unsure, but as I continued, I could hear myself growing stronger. I closed my eyes and let myself sway with the music. I forgot that there was a before and after and all I felt was that moment. I forgot that people were watching me and that you were out there somewhere, listening to me pour my heart out in my lyrics and yet not hearing a single word. The wings on my back quivered as if they were real, and they lifted me up, carrying me over the auditorium, away to a world where pain did not exist.

But after the show, I watched you leave with her and suddenly I was the loneliest girl on the face of the planet. Because I knew that wherever you were, you were talking to her, laughing with her, opening doors for her. You were with her and not me.

**Sincerely,
Me.**

December 7, 2003
To the Boy who Left Me Stranded on the Holidays,

Winter dawns again and I know this year I will spend the holidays cold and alone. Usually by this time I am counting down the days until Christmas, but instead I am counting down the days until Christmas plus one (when it's all over). I trudged around all weekend with my heart in my feet. I am someone who is stuck living inside the wrong skin. Right now I am just being. I am alive. I am turning on my computer I am walking to class I am eating I am studying I am listening to Christmas music I am sleeping I am dreaming but most of all I wish I was having more purpose than all of this. I need to stop wishing and I need to stop hoping...two of the most horrible verbs ever invented. I'd give anything to be content right now; for instead I stand disgusted. I cannot sleep with myself. As time goes on, the hours lengthen but nothing gets erased, nothing becomes crossed out. Maybe I always did ask too many questions, but I need answers. Why am I here & what am I doing?

About a month ago, I had this dream. I was in your house, but I was invisible. I walked down the stairs to your basement, remembering how you always took the steps three at a time. The cold tile floor stung my bare feet. I made my way across the room to your couch and sank down into the slightly scratchy plaid fabric. Everything was the same. The pictures were hung in the same arrangement on the wall. Your drums sat in the corner collecting dust. The coffee table still held the usual lamp and a scattered assortment of water glasses.

The door to your room was cracked, and I couldn't resist entering. I climbed into your bed and huddled under your huge comforter and your sheets, your dark burgundy bed sheets. I pulled your pillows to my face and inhaled you, you, you.

Then I cried, for everything I had lost and for all the time I spent with you that amounted to nothing.

I woke up with wet cheeks.

**Merry Christmas,
Me.**

February 6, 2004

To the Boy who Refuses to Break the Silence,

It's February: the month when, for the past four years, I have lost someone I love. This year I am much too busy to even think about you. I surprised myself; January 28th passed me by without a hitch. I didn't flinch at the date. I didn't cringe when I had to scrawl it down on a piece of paper. I didn't even think to myself, *Today would have been three years.*

I have this theory: I think that we (not necessarily you and me) date people we want to be like. I know this to be true at least in my case; I wanted to be just like you. You're dedicated and passionate, with old-fashioned values to go with it. You're smart in a hidden sort of way, and I respected you more than you will ever know.

One request: stop visiting me in my dreams. Although recently, I've noticed the dream scheme changing. Before, you would come to me and beg me to take you back, and I would just stand there and let you fall into my arms in disbelief. Lately, in my dreams, I actually stand up for myself. Like one last week, you told me I won't get anywhere in life unless I can type 950 words in 4 minutes. I said, "I am going to get

farther in life than you will." Then last night I dreamt you were talking to me on the internet, and you wanted to come over and discuss "us". I told you no.

I told you no. I am damn proud of my dream self.

You know I haven't spoken a word to you since June 24th? Let's keep it that way.

**Fondly,
Me.**

March 28, 2004

To the Boy who Haunts my Memories,

I had a dream about running with scissors, which apparently forecasts only bad things.

Today I cried in my car because it was shaking and it was just another one of those things that is outside my control. My old world is falling apart and a new one is being rebuilt. Certain walls remain the same, but the foundation has changed. I've lost so much, gained so much, and I'm not sure where I'm headed.

I still think about you all the time.

Driving home from work tonight, I came upon the stretch of US-23 just south of exit 77 where you can see ahead for nearly a mile. A place where, you once pointed out, would be perfect to floor it at two o'clock in the morning when no one else is around.

Look at what I do to myself: even if it isn't my initial intention, I fall head over heels. Then I put in all this time (we are talking YEARS of my life) to come up empty-

handed. Abso-fucking-lutely empty-handed. What is wrong with me? WHAT DO I DO WRONG??? I don't get it: I am clearly not smart enough, not pretty enough, not talented enough.

I called you last week and left a voicemail: "My baby doesn't love me anymore." Drunk words filled with disbelief and DISGUST WITH MYSELF.

I. Can't. Do. Anything. Right.

I make my own heartbreak. It's like I am trapped in a glass box and everyone else is happy, except me, because I can list eighty-eight things to beat myself up over.

In my own words, this is getting ri-goddamn-diculous.

**Yours,
Me.**

April 18, 2004

To the Boy who Slept in My Bed Last Night,

Oh, last night. I know that you were here because I can still smell your hair on my pillow. Where to begin? Party at Drew & Eric's. We started off the night there. I was petrified when I saw you standing on the other side of the room with Matt, Kelly, and Sean. They are *my* friends; you were invading *my* territory. But as soon as I realized you were going to be cool about the whole thing, I relaxed a little. The defenses that had shot up as soon as I saw your signature sideburns slowly lowered. I hadn't talked to you in months, but suddenly it was just like old times.

Drinking. Not a lot, but enough. I had one beer and three glasses of jungle juice, and it was not too much but not too little. No more getting frunk, hwasted, drinking-till-my-kidneys-hurt intoxicated, I've decided. Because there is nothing I need to forget, and so much I need to remember. Beer pong with Matt, bonging with Kelly, sharing a bathroom with Sean. Matt screeching, "Sean, you sound GAY AS FUCK on your voicemail message!" You spilling bright red jungle juice all over your pristine white tennis shoes, and then forgetting that you yourself had done it and trying to blame everyone else for the stains. Kissing a very drunk you and later walking you home, threatening to topple each other over the whole way. One of my new flip flops broke, I somehow forgot my green track jacket at Drew & Eric's (Matt recovered it outside the house behind a trash can?), and there is a blister on my right foot and a strange bruise/scrape just below my left knee.

After the long walk home at 2:30 A.M., it was a flurry of clothes and contact cases.

"No, no, please don't cry," you pleaded.

But to me, the tears made so much sense. Why do I always get what I want? If only you could tell me no.

"Are you sure? Are you SURE? You're drunk, are you sure?"

But we both knew, we both saw it coming. I called it back at the beginning of the night, told Ashley exactly what was going to happen. You're always tracing my tattoo with your fingertips. Lights on or off? Don't you dare call me by name, you barely know me anymore. And the way I clung to your waist and pulled you closer, pulled

you farther in. So easy to pull you into my body, not so easy to pull you (or anyone) into my heart.

I STILL CARE ABOUT YOU IN THE MOST FUCKED-UP WAY I HAVE EVER LOVED SOMEONE. But I guess that is just my way.

You try to hide your brown eyes behind your lashes but you can't lie to everyone. After all this time not seeing you, not speaking to you, I still know you, can still tell what you're thinking. You told me we were together last night because you are lonely. So this is what we have become: two lost souls who reveal themselves to each other because we both know the other will understand.

And somewhere in between my dreamless sleep and your snoring body next to mine, I realized that this was not what I wanted. I was different, you were different; we were different. I had spent so much time pining over you, wishing I was with you. Now I had you with me, you were right there next to me, and I didn't care. I. Did. Not. Care. So I walked you home this morning. And we did not hold hands.

**Best Wishes,
Me.**

