

November 22

Zoe,

Oh come on! Lions and giraffes? Have you never been to a toy store? And gesture or not, you have to admit I was partly justified in making you hunt!

You write clues before you finish the letter? Interesting. You know, it's much easier to come up with clues once you've hidden it, right?

I'm glad to know there are some things you can't do. ;) None of those are particularly terrible, of course, but these things serve as more proof that you are an actual living, breathing person, who is (probably) not a serial killer.\*

Now, hang on, you should get at least a little credit for your writing skills. You're giving your mother all of it, but if you hadn't worked at it then you wouldn't be as good as you are. Like, my mother was Mexican, and she wanted us all to be bilingual so she talked to us in both English and Spanish when we were little. But I refused to speak it. I could, because I'd learned it before I was old enough to have an opinion, but once I started going to school and realized that everybody there spoke English, I just stopped. Now I'm taking Spanish again, and while I have an easier time in that class than any of my other classes, it's not like I'm fluent or anything. Everybody said it would be like riding a bike, and it would come back to me, no problem. It didn't. I didn't want to do it as a kid, so I kind of blocked it from my mind. If I hadn't I would probably be the best Spanish speaker in the class. So give yourself a little more credit - obviously you have some hand in being good at English.

My virtues? Hmmm. Well, I'm pretty good at poetry. I can eat spicy stuff like it's candy. I guess you could say I'm good at Spanish, like I said, but not nearly as good as I could be. And, I know you wouldn't believe this from our letters so far, but I'm actually pretty good at settling arguments. John has never forgiven dad for replacing Mom with Rachel, which is ridiculous because Mom left! Anyway, they get into shouting fights any time he's home (so every holiday, which reminds me Thanksgiving is coming up...), and Rachel just throws up her hands and leaves, so it's my job to make peace.

I also get plenty of practice at resolving arguments when Emma decides to dump her latest boy toy - they almost always come up to her some time when we're together, wanting to know if we're, you know, together together and then they want to call me punk and have a throw down, because she usually says yes just to get them off her back. (I gave her permission to do this, by the way, she's not dragging me into these fights against my will. Well, okay, a little bit against my will, mostly because when I agreed to it I didn't think she would do it quite so often, and I'd just lost a bet. But it sounds worse than it is.) Anyway, it takes a bit of creative soothing to get them to back off. I have yet to actually get hit, though, so I'd say I'm pretty good at it.

You're planning for my birthday? Really? I mean, we're practically strangers! My birthday was not recently, I just haven't had much time to write. (Also I keep procrastinating - writing about your favorite thing is difficult because what if you can't do it justice?) I'll tell you when it is if you'll tell me what it is you need to prepare for a stranger's birthday! Really, my day was fine, it was just long and tedious. I had school all day, and most days school is fine. Some days my fellow students kind of suck. Being half-Latino, I don't exactly look white, and there are stuck up jocks who think because I'm Latino I must a) be in a gang, b)

know how to street fight, or c) know where they can get cheap drugs. None of which is true, in case you were worried.

And, I mean, some days I suck (aka everyone else is perfectly pleasant and I'm just not in the mood). Thursday it was more that I suck than anyone else. Also, even though I'm a morning person, there are certain hours that should only be seen by insomniacs, and 5 am is one of them - I had to drive Asher to weight training super early, and I think that helped put me in a bad mood. That was another part of being anonymous that I liked (sorry, I change topics really quickly if you haven't figured it out yet, though after 10 letters I bet you have) - you didn't treat me differently because of my skin. Granted, most people are better than that now, but, well, I bet you didn't imagine me as anything other than white. Projecting an image more like yourself and all (and I'm guessing, from the description of white-blond hair that you are white - blond hair doesn't often come naturally for any other race).

And after that, I feel like we need some more light silliness. So:

-What is your favorite color? (And have I already asked that one and forgotten about it?)

-If you could pick any animal in the world to have as a pet, what would it be and why?

-What is the funniest story your family tells about you? (Take Thanksgiving to do some research, if you like!)

-And finally, what do you wish I would ask you, but I haven't? (And, obviously, give your answer as well!)

Alright, that's enough, especially since you still owe me a Harris Burdick story (\*hinthint\*) I suppose I can allow you a few extra days to reply to this over Thanksgiving (though I hope you'll get it before you leave, and I've sent it to your P.O. Box with my fingers crossed). I'll expect a full report when you get back, of course. ;) Anyway, have a good time.

Alex