

December 20

Zoe,

No puzzle for you either. It occurred to me halfway through the day that this is the last week before winter break for SD schools, and so, in an effort to make sure you got a letter if you were leaving town, I decided to send it to you directly.

Are you still staying in town? Can I say that I kind of hope you are? Everyone is coming here for Christmas (obviously, since the baby is due any day now), and I'm not sure I can endure John and Dad in the same house for two whole weeks without your letters to look forward to.

I accept that you're not a doormat, though I would suggest that Thom is not, perhaps, the best example of not being a doormat, because even though you say it's for you, it's still rooted in something you are feeling for someone else. (Paraphrasing a letter of yours from forever ago: You feel like you have to hate him because your mother doesn't (enough) - I did my research!) I would also argue that while not exactly being a doormat, it does seem that when you decide someone else's need is greater than yours, you feel like you are obligated to do something about it. You could, for example, have given Lissa the phone number of a good counselor, or suggested in the nicest way possible that she find someone closer to her age to talk to. Just because she picked you doesn't mean it had to be you.

I guess I just-- I worry about you. (You've said you worry about me, so I'm allowed to worry about you, right? That's not weird or anything?) I've seen people like you who allow their sense of duty to overshadow their sense of self, and it can do terrible things to a person. I want to make sure you're not letting "should" rule your

life. Surprisingly enough, I actually like hearing happy peppy Zoe, even though I thought I would get really annoyed by her after a while (don't worry, I know I won't now) and I don't want her to go away.

What happened with Gabe? Which situation were you filling him in on? The thing with Lissa? I don't see what he could be angry about. And also, I don't see where he gets off yelling at you when he has been practically ignoring you for the past two weeks! How is that fair? He's been a terrible friend and now he gets to tell you whatever it was you decided to do while he was too busy for you is wrong? Hell no! You may inform him that if he chooses to continue to act like a dick, I have two brothers coming home for Christmas this Friday, one of whom is in the Marines, and my father probably helped his mom buy her house or find her apartment, so I can find out where he lives!

Anyway, even though you thought the list was controversial, I like what you came up with. I didn't mean that you had to completely leave other people out of it! I just meant for you to list some things that you just wanted, not things that you "should" want, or knew that you were supposed to want, etc. All of the things you listed fit that. Also, I'm flattered that I'm on that list. ~~It still amazes me that you trust me so much, even though we've never met.~~

Hey now, you write a novel every letter! (Which I like, and you had better not stop doing now, or I'll think something is wrong and come looking for your abductor!) It wasn't a hardship, but it took forever.

You used my quotes without my permission?!* I certainly hope you withheld names! I might have to sue!* :P

I only tacked the "y" on the end because it doesn't fit the sing-song if I didn't! Anyway, I thought you said someone asked you to prom - re-reading it, I guess I missed a few words. Since prom is a good couple of months away-- Well, anyway. Doesn't matter.

I'm going to address your postscript before I get to your questions. First, I'm honestly flattered that you are this worried about me. Why should you care what happens to someone who was a stranger a mere three months ago? (I'll answer myself: because you care about everybody. You can't help it. Still.) ~~I haven't had anyone~~ I could never hate somebody for worrying about me. But, well, just because you share every (okay, most) detail of your life doesn't mean I share every detail of mine.

Personally? I think you're right. I think I was drugged. But honestly, who drugs someone like me and then doesn't take advantage of it by stealing at least my wallet? It doesn't make sense. What does make sense is drugging Emma. She is very pretty. Whoever was serving the drinks probably thought that since she was getting a beer and a soda, the soda was for her and the beer for her boyfriend. They hand her the drugged soda, and she hands it to me, nobody the wiser. Whoever did it is disappointed when she doesn't pass out, and I end up back at home with no memory but everything else intact. It sucks, but it also makes sense.

I've asked Emma multiple times who was passing out drinks that night, but her memory is hazy at best. She isn't even sure how many beers she had, and usually she's pretty good at counting - she's proud that she can manage a good 6 or 7 before she blacks out. If she can't tell me how many she's had, I usually stay the night just to make sure she doesn't choke on her own vomit. But, between Winter Formal, and her asshole of a boyfriend (who is the closest thing to a douche-weasel in my life,

and was probably hoping to get some if he got her drunk enough) she had way too much and can't remember more than bits and pieces after we arrived at the party. She doesn't even remember that she went to get the drinks.

So yes, I am thinking about it, but I'm being practical, okay? I don't know any more, and I don't know how to find out more. In two days everyone is leaving for winter break, and by the time they all get back, that party will be old news. I get that you're worried (actually, I don't, but I'm flattered) and I won't ask you to butt out. But, I can't work miracles, okay? I can't conjure witnesses from thin air.

And, well, thank you. For caring, I mean.

Okay! Enough of that! Questions:

1) Just three states, if you can believe it. I live in California (obviously), we took a vacation once to Hawaii (remember Rachel likes the tropics?) and I went with dad on business to NYC once. I would love to travel more, but I can't afford it on my own, and Dad and Rachel just don't get it.

2) I... don't know if I'm good at knots? I can untie my shoes. It's not something that comes up regularly.

3) Ah, lids I am good at! Of course, I'm typically the oldest male home during the day, so Rachel relies on me to do it, even though the twins are more athletic. We won't tell her it's all in how you prep it, okay? :)

And since I asked you silly questions that you already answered last week, I will ask a few more (even though this letter is already far longer than I usually write):

1) Given the ability to project yourself into the future, but not to return, would you do so? Would you go if you could take someone along?

2) If you were God for a day what would you do?

3) Who is your favorite musician and what kind of music do they play?

4) If you could learn any skill overnight, what skill would it be and why?

5) You can put 5 things in a time capsule that will be opened in 500 years. What do you choose and why?

And, just in case you don't have enough to write about,* answer the questions of yours that you have not yet answered.

Your Friend,
Alex