October 17

Zoe,

You really don't care at all what people think of you? I find that both impressive and unlikely. We all have something about ourselves that we care about people liking (or possibly disliking). Yours may not be your looks, or your intelligence (either excessive or lacking - I'm not judging), but you're lying to yourself if you think there is nothing you want people to think about you. And before you protest, let me ask a relevant question: if you don't care what people think about you, then why are you so uncomfortable with making other people uncomfortable?

While I appreciate the sentiment of you buying me a sugar high, what would you have done if I were allergic to artificial coffee flavorings? What if I'm vegan and by substituting soy milk the flavor is ruined? Neither of those things happen to be true, but they could have been!

After that latte, I am only more convinced I am right. I made it to three sips, but gagged on every one! I have ordered you a Chai Latte in retaliation. It is not nearly as sweet, and is only sweet because of the spices, NOT sugar. Same terms: you'll get your letter when you've given it a fair try (just be grateful I didn't order you a black Americano and make you drink it!)

See? A hot drink can taste good without all that sugar!

You're really not getting the self-made persona thing here, are you? It's not a bad thing that you're creating the person you want to be. Think about it: are you the same person with your parents as you are with your best friend? I can almost guarantee you're not. Be honest: have you told your family that you're now corresponding with a complete stranger who refuses to reveal their identity? Even as unconventional as your family is, I suspect someone would be unhappy with it. And I bet there are a few parts of you (if tiny) that you keep only for yourself. Being able to create another persona can be the greatest freedom, especially if one of your selves is kind of restrictive. We all do it some, even if it's not a conscious choice. It's like marketing. Given the choice, ad executives prefer the airbrushed and photoshopped versions of their advertising, because it shows their product in the absolute "best" light. There's all kinds of problems with that analogy, because in the end all that does is breed disappointment and give eating disorders to little girls, but on a personal level, if you take that attitude and then add a little bit of "fake it till you make it" then you can actually change who you are, bit by bit. If you want to. What I was trying to say is that because I don't know you, I don't know if you're trying to be this perfect, upbeat, happy girl, or if it comes naturally.

You can tell Gabe that I'm not actually paranoid and skeptical, but rather provoking and sarcastic (translation: I was teasing). I am surprised that you really think I'm paranoid. That's not it at all. OK, maybe a little at first, but now I'm just having too much fun being anonymous to stop. Tell you what though - to prove I'm not the paranoid and skeptical person you think I am, I will allow you two questions, any questions you wish to ask. I promise I will answer them, though as I've said, I'm enjoying being anonymous, so my answers may be a little puzzling.

Hang on, I didn't say I didn't have any goals, just that I didn't know what career I wanted when I grow up! There are a few things I'd like to do, they just happen to be the kind of things one doesn't get paid to do. But, since you've asked

(and no, I won't count this against your two questions, even though it is a bit prying*) here are five things I do NOT want to do:

1. Real Estate Agent (aka "What my Dad does").
2. Cashier.
3. Anything to do with the sciences. Unless I can make it explode, I'm not interested, and exploding things jobs usually only go to people like rocket scientists (which I do NOT have the IQ for).
4. The military. My oldest brother went, and it's definitely not for me.
5. Modeling.

I apologize for such a short letter (probably that will be <u>my</u> recurring problem). I know I'm skipping one of your challenges. It's been a long couple of days, and I'm low on both sleep and creative juices. I never was much of a prose-writer, but I will try to complete it in the next letter.

Alex