

You will find your letter in the following location:

1. San Diego Symphony Orchestra
2. Noises Off
3. Dog walkers for hire
4. Home repair

PS - Thank you for the Chai Latte - it was delicious! I like chai, but I like my aunt's homemade blend better than Cuppa Joe's, so I don't tend to order them here. I feel guilty, though, that you bought me a drink I actually like when I didn't do the same, so your next boring cappuccino is on me. :)

October 19

Alex,

You are, without a doubt, one of the most fascinating people I have ever had an extended conversation with. Seriously. And what I love most about this spirited back and forth is that I feel like we're both honestly trying to understand the other.

So I need to clarify something that I didn't express well in my last letter: I care about what people think of me. I want people to like me, to think well of me, to see me as a friendly, open, warm, and approachable person. But if I'm not, it doesn't bother me. It's impossible to be liked by everyone. I am upbeat and cheerful and endlessly optimistic, and that is not everyone's cup of tea, and I totally get that.

And I'm not bothered by the people who so actively dislike me (or so completely don't know me) that they hurl insults or make personal comments, because those things say a lot more about whoever's saying them than they do about me. You think I'm too tall? That my hair is stupid? That I'm a sucky trombone player? That's fine, dude. You go right ahead and think those things. They don't affect me. Because 5'8" isn't that tall, I like my hair, and I'm a kick-ass trombone player. Your words don't matter to me.

That's what I meant. But I think I didn't say it well. Hopefully here I've said it better.

As for your projected observations of my family, sorry Alex, but you're kinda dead wrong. I am largely the same person with my mother as with my best friend because my mother is one of my best friends. (You will probably say that this is a

cop-out answer, and also that it's not what you meant. I am aware. I will address that in due time. Patience, grasshopper.)

~~My mom and I don't keep secrets.~~ Okay, amending that, because I know what you're going to say, and I'm heading you off at the pass. Mom and I are open with each other. I'm not saying we tell each other everything, but I've never felt like I needed to hide things from her, and while I can't exactly speak for her, I do know that she has answered every question I've ever asked with directness and honesty.

So, yes, Mom knows about these letters. She's known about them from the beginning, and she knows about everyone I'm currently writing to. Joe knows too, and for all I built him up last letter, he's a remarkably laid-back guy. They ask me about the experiment all the time, but they don't pry, and all they've asked me to do is let them know if I ever feel threatened or weird about anything anyone says. They're actually pretty interested in my results.

But you're not totally wrong. There are people who think I'm crazy for doing this: This girl in my Soc class, Shawna, is one, but she also believes that the moon landing was faked, so . . .

That's why I don't find you paranoid, you know. I've learned what paranoid looks like, and you aren't it. I never said you were, by the way. That was Gabe, and in his defense, he was working off a slapdash 20-second summary, and I probably didn't do you justice. But I don't think you're paranoid. I also think that the anonymity and puzzle of what we're doing is fun! :)

But now to address what you meant, that we're different versions of ourselves with different people. It's not that I don't "get" the idea of a self-made persona, it's that I don't want that to be true for me. ~~Like~~

I'm not explaining this well. Please bear with me.

I don't want to create different versions of me. I want to be me with everyone. You say it's not a bad thing, and maybe it isn't, but to me, it's the first step toward living a lie. It's not living a lie, but it's easy to get from point A to point B. I just want one Zoe, and I want to be her with everyone - you, my mom, Gabe, Mr. Zephran, everybody.

Are there some parts of me I hold back just to myself? Sure. I mean, I'm sure there are. I've never really thought about it before. But, I mean, I suppose you're right. I suppose you have to be. But if I'm not naturally this "perfect, upbeat, happy girl," if it is something I decided to be (though let me be the first to assure you that I'm far from perfect), then it was long enough ago that I don't remember making the decision. So who can say?

Bleh. Words are hard.

Anyway, my two questions. Sorry in advance, but they're gonna suck. Like, I'm thrilled you're giving me two questions, and I'm totally using them, but right now you're an outlier in my data, which is causing issues for this project, so 1. Gender, 2. Age, thank you very much. I promise that should I, in the future, earn the privilege of asking more personal questions, they will be more interesting.

~~So, when I asked you~~

Sorry. Didn't mean to break off in the middle of a sentence there, but they just announced the designer assignments for the fall drama season and Gabe needed to vent (also, I don't remember what I was going to say anymore).

An explanation: Gabe is a costume designer, and he takes it very seriously.

Now, never mind that Gabe is designing twice as many shows as any other student director this season, and never mind that he got his top three choices, he's pissed because for his fourth show, they gave him the fall musical, You're a Good Man Charlie Brown, and he feels that the show lacks the scope of creativity since the costumes are based out of the comic strip and there's nothing original left to be done with them and that his vision is being forced into a box.

He takes his job very seriously. He's also quite melodramatic.

He'll be over it in a few days, and he'll turn out something brilliant that presents the costumes everyone knows and loves, but with some amazing original twist that everyone here will talk about for years. He always does.

Anyway.

Asking you to list five things you don't want to be was for your benefit, not mine. If you make the list long enough, you'll hit on what you want your future to be about simply by process of elimination. Though for someone who is loving anonymity so much, there was an awful lot of information in those five things. Could it be that you actually do want to reveal some things about yourself?*

Until next time.

Zoe

PS - I'm sorry you had a long couple of days. I hope that they weren't bad ones, merely exhausting ones, and I hope that the days since have been better.