

**Alex:** Zoe's letter, March 2nd.

Zoe's back!

Now, on to some very serious business. **[Adopts a tone of mock-telling-off]** Zoe Ballard, how dare you lie to me? I thought we were better friends than that! If I can't trust you to tell the truth about grass and wheels, then how can I trust you at all? **[A hint of laughter]**

I'm glad that I could help, although I didn't feel particularly helpful at the time. I felt... I didn't know what to say, so I'm glad my ramblings did the trick. You're right, no one has died of unrequited love yet. I mean, I dealt with it for four years, and I'm still here. Well, three and a half I guess, if you subtract— but then... well, anyways. You will get through this, and I'm here if you need me. Especially since I might get a nifty "Save the Whales!" tote bag out of it.

New drama-- As if either of us needed that. I'm sorry that talking to Thom sucked. I don't... so soon after we've sort of... fixed... well, us, I don't want to piss you off again, but I think—

**[Pause]**

I think both you and Thom are too busy being mad at each other to think rationally about *why* you're mad. I don't think it's just that you're mad at him for not being there. I mean, he probably doesn't realize how loyal you are, and how... indignant you get when people aren't angry enough for you. But, at the same time, he does have a point. You being *so* angry at someone you had never met for something that happened before you were even

born... I understood that you were, and that you needed to be, but I— it didn't make sense to me. I wonder, if you would start to see things differently if you ever had a conversation with him where neither of you got mad.

I'm--sorry, I'm probably not helping. All that's going to happen is you're now going to be mad at me... **[under his breath, sarcastically]** just what I wanted.

**[Pause]**

Okay, on to happier things. Happier things are... good.

Oh, **[laughs]** it, uh, just means girl. It's used as a nickname sometimes. I can try not to use it if you don't want me to.

**[Pause]**

Emma is... definitely trying. She's almost always got somewhere for us to go, something for us to do. She's kept me so busy it's getting difficult to find time to record your letters - I'm going to have to start setting an alarm for 4 am and do them before school, just to be sure they get done! Don't worry, though, I don't mind sacrificing the extra hour of sleep.

**[Pause. His voice becomes more agitated.]**

I don't know what I'd say to you, because you wouldn't— you don't— this could never happen with you. First of all, you wouldn't put me in a situation where I could get this badly hurt like-- Well, I mean, I don't think sh--

anyone would do it on *purpose* obviously, but you'd be more careful than sh-- most people would. Second, you would know better than to blame yourself for my own damn clumsiness, and you wouldn't be using it to m-- not that she's. . . And third, if either of those first two *were* true, you wouldn't hide from it, you'd *talk* about it. You would apologize a million times and ask me how you can make it up to me, but you wouldn't just... take it upon yourself to play nurse for hours on end. It's almost... it's not that I don't appreciate it, but after being used to her always being off doing her own thing, the change is a little overwhelming, you know? And you'd get that too, when I say I want to be left alone, you'd leave me the-- You'd -- You'd respect that I need some space instead of checking on me every five minutes.

**[slight pause, then he begins again very quietly]** Is it weird to say I've imagined it? And the way I've imagined it, it would be peaceful. Emma is always moving, always adjusting my sling, or offering to go get me more water, or *something*, and for all your bright personality, I feel like it would be—

Well, anyway. She's great. I am... constantly amazed that she just dropped everything as soon as I really needed her.

**[Pause]**

You're right, we shouldn't be nervous. Why, when we're so comfortable in text or voice, is in-person so unbelievably scary? It seems wrong. So yes, I can promise not to greet you, no matter what the circumstances. Besides, we *will* already be in the middle of a conversation, because isn't that what our letters are? We just give each other *really long turns* to talk.

**[Pause]**

You haven't expressed a desire for Prince Charming, but I figure all girls harbor a secret crush on him. Otherwise, Disney wouldn't keep using him to lure them in.

**[Pause]**

Don't worry, I'm gonna hang on to that friend as long as she'll let me.

**[Knock at the door]**

**Emma:** Alex?

**Alex:** Yeah, I'm coming, one sec.

Sorry, I gotta go. Emma's got yet another outing planned. Talk to you later, *chica*.