

Letters to You, Wherever You Are

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Letters to You, Wherever You Are

by [revancequeen](#)

Summary

Six months after the Turning began, Roberto and his princess have been separated and he still has yet to find her. His love for her and determination for them to reunite gives him the strength to fight for survival in a world overrun by the undead. To keep his hope alive and cope with this new reality, he starts writing his princess letters that he can't send, hoping to hand them to her in person when they meet again at last. But time passes, and the letters pile up. According to the old sayings, "hope springs eternal" and "love never dies"...but neither, it seems, does the ever-looming threat of the undead.

Notes

[Alternate title: Love and Longing and Zombies]

Special thanks to my friends for their helpful feedback and/or yelling at me for making them sad--your comments made making myself sad while writing this worth it.

My sweet princess,

How are you? I hope you're safe, somehow. I hope I can find you soon. I can't believe we've been separated for nearly six months now. Six months, and I still haven't been able to find you.

I hope you'll forgive me for taking so long when we meet again. These past months haven't been easy on you either, I'm sure. They haven't been easy for anyone. Anyone still alive, at least.

I've managed to keep surviving, but it's mostly thanks to Al. I've never been more grateful for him than I am now, though I should have appreciated him more before this all happened. I feel like I took everything for granted back then. But then again, how was I supposed to know this would happen? How was anyone supposed to even guess?

Everyone Al and I meet says the same thing, more or less: they don't know why people started turning. It was just so sudden, and it was happening everywhere, and even though governments and scientists and medical experts worldwide tried to find the source, tried to find a solution, some sort of answer, anything...

They didn't find it fast enough.

And pretty soon there wasn't really anyone left who could try to find it at all.

You know all this, of course. I'm sure things are difficult for you, but as long as you're safe that's what matters. I think of you every day. I worry about you every day.

My thoughts are getting kind of dark now, so I'm going to end this letter here. But I'll keep writing to you. I hope I don't have to write many more letters before I find you again.

*Love,
Roberto*

My darling princess,

Can you believe it's been two years since we last saw each other? Neither can I. It seems like it's all just been a nightmare with no end, and it continues whether I'm awake or asleep. The only difference is that at least when I'm sleeping I can forget what the world's like for a short while.

Or at least I could, when Al was still here. Now that he's gone, I don't sleep nearly as much. For one thing, I'm not as safe on my own. But also...I can't stop thinking.

Could I have saved him?

I should have tried harder to save him.

I could have saved him, right?

I've seen multiple undead since the Turning began. I've had to put down so many with my own hands, or with Al's help. I've heard stories from other survivors about what it was like for them to see their own friends fall to the undead and not be able to help them. Or to have to take them down after they turned.

But it was the first time I had to face it myself.

I knew Al was struggling. I knew something was wrong. But Al kept telling me he was just tired, and that he'd rest when we found another safe area. I believed him. I just took him at his word, because for all the trouble I gave him when the world was normal, and even after it became hell on earth, he stuck by me.

I should have pushed him for answers, though. A real answer.

I just lied to myself, thinking that despite everything that's happened, nothing could ever happen to Al.

We used to joke and call him "Super Butler Alberto," remember?

But we were wrong.

I let myself forget that even Al is only human.

He started turning right before my eyes. He just smiled at me and said he didn't know it would happen so soon. He thought he had more time to protect me. He said he was sorry he couldn't stay and help me find you.

He said it was the greatest honor of his life that he could serve me until the end.

He told me to stay safe.

Then he put his gun to his head and it was over. Just like that.

The turning process.

Him.

All of it.

I kind of lost myself for a little while after that. I don't know how long it was. But when I came back to myself nothing had changed.

There aren't any bullets left, but I still have his gun. It's pretty much just dead weight now. But I won't throw it away. I can't.

Right now, I miss you more than ever. I wish I could hold you. Bury my face in your shoulder, your warmth. You'd wrap your arms around me, just like you used to, and run your fingers through my hair like always. And you'd tell me it was okay, right?

You'd say it wasn't my fault.

And that you still love me.

I promise I'll keep looking for you. Always. I won't give up until we find each other again.

*All my love,
Roberto*

Dearest princess,

Happy birthday. I wish I could tell you in person, but it's been three years since I've seen your face, except in my dreams. Three years since the Turning started. Honestly one of the only things that helps me keep track of the passage of time nowadays is remembering important dates like this one.

Every day, I wonder how you're doing and where you are. I wonder if you're thinking of me, too. Are you doing all right, or as "all right" as anyone can be in this world? Are you safe with others? Are you struggling to make it alone?

Can I tell you a secret? Sometimes I talk to the ring I meant to propose to you with. I take it out of my pocket and I hold it up to the light, if there is any--the sun, a flame, or even the moon. I hold it so the gemstone catches the light.

I chose this ring for the stone, a garnet, a Rhodolite garnet, because pink is your favorite color but I would be asking you to join your life with mine as a ruler of Altaria, and of course the traditional color worn by Altarian rulers is red. A Rhodolite garnet would have been perfect, don't you think? Some of you, and some of me, married together as one.

I thought I was being poetic, back then. And I was sure you would have loved that. We were both romantics at heart, after all. I kept thinking of the smile you'd show me when I finally offered you this ring, and I couldn't keep the smile off my own face.

I kept thinking of the moment you'd say "Yes." I was going to give you my mother's necklace right after that. You know how much it meant to me. You knew why it meant so much.

She told me to give it to whoever I fell in love with and wanted to marry. Growing up, that had seemed like such an absurd idea, you know? Who could I find whose love I could actually trust, who would care enough to look beyond my royal title and just...see me?

But I found you.

The fabled undead becoming reality had seemed ridiculous, too.

We were so happy, weren't we? So full of hope. Every time I stare at the garnet of your ring, I remember that. I remember you.

But it's been three years.

The other night I was talking to "you" by the fire in the encampment that took me in. Maybe they think I'm strange, but after I saved their leader from an undead, they can't say anything. So I talk to you, and I always imagine what you'd say back to me. How you'd smile, how you'd laugh.

But that night, for a second, for too long, I forgot exactly what your voice sounds like.

And I broke down. Another secret that I might tell you someday. In person. Or maybe I'll always keep it buried within me, another shard of the past to torment me.

I don't want to forget you, but it's been three years. It's only been three years, so why am I forgetting things about you already?

How could it have taken three years for me to forget?

Just three years?

I have to find you soon.

I'll find you because I promised so please find me.

I love you please love me.

I miss you so much. I love you. I miss you.

I love you I love you I love you

*I love you I love you I love you I love you I love you I love you I love you I love you I love you
I love you I love you I love you I love you I love you I love you I love you I love you I love you
I love you I love you I love*

She gasped for air, adrenaline jolting her senses as she gripped her knife and wrenched it out of the undead's skull. She grimaced at the painfully sharp sensation of the blade catching before sliding free, the sound, the *smell*. Though she'd had to experience this far too many times by now, she would never be able to get used to it.

The undead collapsed like a discarded marionette, awful in the utter gracelessness of its landing, beautiful beyond belief when it did not move again even after she distanced herself

from it and drew several long, unsteady breaths in and out, in and out.

She finally moved closer, kneeled down and wiped her blade clean on the now truly deceased corpse's fraying blue scarf. At least it had probably been blue, once. Or purple. In another life.

Judging from the state of its clothes, it had probably been wandering for a long time. It was hard to tell just from its face--sagging and sunken in, a trait all undead shared once they completely turned. Shaggy, matted dark hair clung to its skull and stuck out in haphazard clumps, when it wasn't completely missing in patches. And the *smell*...!

But this was standard for all the undead. Bereft of any identifiable features they'd had in life--real life--and focused only on consuming the flesh of survivors however they could. For some survivors, this made them easier to "kill." For others, it only made it worse. The faceless undead were a constant, haunting reminder of what had befallen humanity, and what could happen to those who'd managed to stay alive this long if they were unlucky or careless.

This undead had seemed oddly more tenacious than others she'd had the misfortune to directly encounter, though. It had just kept coming at her, even ignoring her scavenging partner until she'd managed to drive her knife through its skull and into its brain...

"Are you hurt?" Her partner's voice broke through her thoughts, urgent and concerned.

She heaved in a breath to steady her nerves so she could refocus on the task at hand. "I'm fine; it didn't get me. I'll check if it has anything useful."

"Good." An answering sigh of relief. "I'll cover you, then. Don't take too long."

"Thanks."

Holding her knife at the ready in one hand, just in case, she began digging through the corpse's pockets, as was now a well-ingrained habit born from practicality. Sometimes these searches turned up nothing, and sometimes she just found trinkets that were probably only kept for sentimental value before their owner had been turned. Occasionally she managed to get lucky with a knife or other weapon to add to her arsenal, or some hoarded non-perishable food item that would serve her far better than the corpse she'd looted it from.

Her first find today was half of a dried up ballpoint pen, snapped in two by an unknown force, its other half missing forever. Mildly baffling, but ultimately useless and not worth her attention.

Next was a phone with a scratched-up case and cracked screen. She vaguely recognized the brand and model--it had been touted in every ad imaginable back when capitalism was a thing by an internationally renowned boy band with perfect smiles. She didn't try turning it on, just tossed it aside. It wouldn't have been charged in ages, anyway.

Her only other findings were a pocket knife, which she pocketed herself, and a ring on a loop of frayed twine, tarnished and dull but clearly very finely crafted even to her untrained eyes. Rose gold, with a small, dark red stone--probably a ruby.

She hesitated, then pocketed that as well. It could potentially be used to barter, at least. Though its monetary and societal value were long obsolete, there were some in this world who still clung to such things as a memento of days long past, or in hopes of a tentative, very far off future in which such baubles would be coveted commodities again.

It was only when she rolled the body over to rifle through its back pockets that she realized a thin, patched-up backpack was strapped to its shoulders. She wondered how it had managed to stay on throughout the process of the body being turned, through its doomed, ambling journey with only one morbid goal ever in its slowly decomposing mind--but quickly shook such thoughts away and pulled on the zipper of the small front compartment with a sharp jerk. She'd learned a long time ago that it was better if she didn't ruminate pointlessly about the lives of the undead before they'd turned.

The front compartment yielded several rolls of clean gauze, which immediately went into her own bag of scavenged spoils. The larger middle compartment bestowed four unopened cans of beans, a metal spork with one of the tines slightly bent, and even a fairly full box of matches.

Now feeling slightly more hopeful, she drew down the zipper of the largest compartment...and felt her eyes snap wide open at what she saw inside.

A handgun.

Jackpot!

Her elation quickly faded as she discovered, upon examining it more closely, that it was not loaded with bullets. Digging deeper down in the compartment revealed the discouraging truth: the bag contained only an empty gun with no spare ammunition, which was no more useful to her than the broken phone she'd discarded earlier.

Wait--what is this...

Though her rummaging had resulted in a disappointing lack of bullets, there was one more thing left in the bag. She pulled out a bulky stack of papers of all different sizes and thickness and colors, bound together with the dirty, tangled chain of what had probably once been a necklace. Squinting, she could make out some scrawls on the top-most piece of paper; a little faded, but still identifiable as handwriting.

"...Letters?" The whispered query slipped out of her, unbidden.

"Did you check everything? We should head back. It's going to get dark soon."

Her head jerked up at her partner's voice, and she hastily stuffed the bundle of papers into her own bag as she got to her feet.

"Sure, Jan. At least this scavenging trip wasn't a total waste."

"What did you find?" His words were warm and almost casual as they fell into step beside each other, though his hard gaze never stopped darting about, constantly surveying their

surroundings as they made their way back to the safe area.

"A knife, some food, gauze, and matches. A spork, if you can believe it. Oh, and an old ring. And a bunch of...I think some letters?"

"Letters, huh?" Jan's voice softened a hair. "If there were that many, I wonder if they were holding onto them. Looking for someone, maybe."

"Well, they looked like letters, but I could be wrong. Maybe it was some sort of diary just written on whatever scraps of paper they could find."

"I suppose you'll find out when we get back." He let out a chuckle, rare for him these days, and her soul briefly sparked to life when she heard it. "I'm almost looking forward to it now. Let me know if they say anything interesting."

"Don't get your hopes up too much... But yeah. I will."

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