

Source Decay

USA 20c



Robin & Apple Blossom

Content Notes: Mentions of self-harm

Special thanks to my beta readers Dylan and Vee!

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Lanie Oxedine
5 Honey Locust Drive
Colton, West Virginia

She took a slow, deep breath. This was, by all accounts, impossible. She hadn’t told anybody where she was going when she left, because she didn’t know herself. And it had been 5 years. She’d hoped her memory would fade (for most people, anyway). Evidently, it didn’t.

Robin set the letter down on the kitchen table like it was a hunk of nuclear waste. She stared, long and hard, like it would accomplish something. From two feet away, the woman on the stamp was indecipherable. The birds sang outside.

Then she opened it.

Dear Robin,

I know it’s been a while. I hope you’re well. My husband has a friend who teaches at Palisades University and vacations here in the summers. He left his phone book open and I saw you in there. I hope you don’t mind.

A lot has happened in my life since we last saw each other. If you couldn't tell, Ira and I got married. He would like to adopt a child. We have a lovely little house near the woods, and I've been keeping a garden. It's all very pleasant, but I have been thinking about you a lot as of late. If I am honest, I always have been.

You know I can't love Ira, not the same way I love you. I think he knows, too. I've yet to find another woman in Colton like us. Even if I could, they wouldn't hold a candle to you.

It was at this point that the page tore in half. Robin didn't do it on purpose. Her hands had been gripping the pages so tight that they were shaking, and shaking hard. Her fingers left indents in the page. She relaxed her grip, moved the halves back together, and kept reading.

It may be childish, but I'm still in love with you. I hear you in bass music, I see you when a robin lands in my garden, I feel you when I walk in the woods. It's tearing me apart. Do you remember my old treehouse?

Her hands started to tremble again. The page became difficult to read.

When I visited my parents last week, I went up in it, just to try to remember the way you felt. I am always remembering you.

Which brings me to what I ask of you. Run away with me, one more time. We could start a new life together, in Colton or somewhere else. Please come visit, at least. It's a long way from Connecticut but I think it would be good for both of us. We could even just keep writing each other. I want you back in my life, Robin, and I have since you left. You may feel angry or confused, but please think about what I've said.

Love,
Lanie LaRappeler

Robin stood there quietly for a minute. She wasn't thinking anything in particular. Then she grabbed a stack of notebook paper and began to draft a reply.

She took a sheet and fell upon it like a hawk seizing a rabbit. She wrote for half an hour. She thought of the poetry she read, the music she heard, and pulled from the depths of her heart. It was difficult, and painful, but she had something that truly expressed her feelings on the matter. When she was done, she had this:

YOU BITCH

She crumpled up the page and tried again.

Dear Lanie,

Great to hear from you! I was hoping you'd taken my advice and gotten run over by a train by now. I'll just have to settle for telling you to kill yourself.

Again.

Hi Lanie,

Thanks for the apology you didn't put in there. Unfortunately, I won't drop everything to move 7 hours away to a small town that knew me before I transitioned, putting myself in danger, just to rail someone who cheated on me and ruined my life. Die.

Again.

Lanie,

I finally fucking moved on and now you're pulling this bullshit

Lanie,

Give me my tapes back.

Lanie,

In what way would seeing the person who tore my life to shreds be good for either of us? Oh, right, I guess it would be pretty good for you. Until I put an ax through your head.

Lanie,

I still have feelings for you

Ira Oxedine,

You might remember me as Robin Vickers. I was in your lab partner in 10th grade biology class. I'm sorry that none of your second semester projects ever turned out. That was my fault. I did it on purpose. I am writing to tell you

Lanie,

I've said some really awful things about him in the past, but Ira is a good man. You shouldn't have put him in this position. I won't do this to him or myself.

Lanie,
Come on, man.

Lanie,
It's great to hear from you. Genuinely. I'm glad you're O.K. But I'm trying to stop being a teenager

Lanie,
Yes, I do remember your treehouse. I also remember making you promise to break up with Ira before I ran away from home to stay with you, and then finding you making out with him a week later. Get your shit sorted and don't drag me into it.

Lanie,
I am drowning. There is no sign of land

Lanie,
By the time you get this letter, I will have already driven to your house and shouted at you in person. I probably cried and maybe Ira was there and it was very embarrassing for all of us, but you deserved whatever really harsh thing/ things I said. I am sending this preemptively to remind you:

FUCK YOU

Lanie,
My original plan was to drive to your house and yell at you in person. I got in the car and everything. Unfortunately, I am currently being paid under the table at a grocery store and there is DEFINITELY some wage theft happening, so I'm not buying all that gas. Attached is a cassette tape of me screaming and sobbing unintelligibly. It is double-sided. Please listen to all of it. I won't know, but I'm sure you'll feel very guilty.

Lanie,
I have tits now! It's great! I date all the people I want without settling for the first person that recognizes me as a woman! You have competition now. Try harder.

Lanie,
If you would've just apologized, then maybe I could

Lanie,

Do you ever think that calling a place in West Virginia "Coal Town" was on the nose? Like what were they thinking haha. They were like "What's around here?" "I don't know, coal." "Okay, that works." Or maybe they saw a young horse. It's raining outside right now. I ate cereal for breakfast. I like dogs. My favorite color is red. Oh my god that's why you addressed this in red ink with a red stamp fuck

Lanie,

Do you actually love me? Seriously. Just tell me. Not because I was the only girl around for you to fuck, but because I'm actually worth something to you. I think I am, honestly. But with what you did to me, and how bad it hurt, I can't know for sure.

Lanie,

I'm sorry for what I said to you the last time I saw you. It was awful, seriously awful, and I didn't mean any of it. I was so sad and scared and angry that I didn't even know what to

Lanie,

I remember sitting on the curb with you while you taught me how to braid your hair. You wanted me to tie it with green ribbon. I was so awful at it, and you were so patient. You were there for me when the only other person I trusted lived on the other side of the country. I think that should count for something.

Lanie,

We were going to go to Paris one day.

Lanie,

You were the most beautiful person I'd ever met. I cried once because I'd never look like you, and I'd never see anyone like you again. You were an angel.

Lanie,

I'm packing my bags and will leave on

Lanie,

I'm not 16 anymore. I'm not terrified of my body, I'm not living with my mom, I'm not cutting in the bathroom at school. How dare you drag me back to that place and act like I'm still a naive, helpless little girl who will cling to the first shred of kindness I'm shown. Never speak to me again.

Lanie,

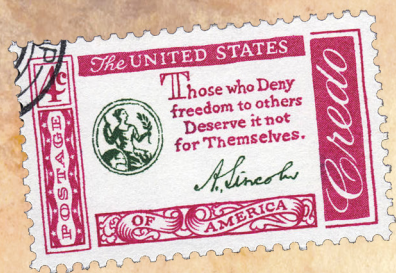
I think part of me is going to be 16 forever. That part of me is in love with you. They want to drop everything, move back to Colton, and have a thrilling secret romance. However, they do not make the decisions. The part of me that's 21 does, and she has a job, a life, and a hole in her heart she's been carrying for 5 years.

And then Robin ran out of paper. She was glad she hadn't wasted any of her good stationery.

It was still drizzling. She wiped tears from her eyes and snot from her nose. She felt floaty and distant and a little bit sick, like she'd slept for too long, and her throat hurt from shouting. Coffee would help the weirdness, and sitting by the window and listening to the rain.

So she brewed some coffee and put on a jacket and opened the window. It was beginning to get dark. Students were swarming the cool, foggy streets, getting a head start on bar hopping. The streetlamps glowed gold on the slate gray of everything else. A gull cried somewhere, and the rain smelled sweet. Up here, watching the world in her own place... It was like being up in that treehouse, but with less mosquitos and a better view.

Robin took a sip of her coffee. In the morning, she was going to go down to the post office and get a big, yellow envelope that would fit all her drafts. She'd write the address in green. She felt raw and tired. The sun set behind the clouds, invisibly.



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