

Ward 6
Nightingale hospital
School Road
Birmingham
B10 1LU

How do I start this letter? Do I say "Dear Lola" because you're still dear to me? Do I just say "To Lola" seeing as this letter is to you? Bearing that in mind, do I say "For Lola" but that sounds like a eulogy? Or shall I just start with your name. It's still as beautiful as when I first heard it.

Lola,

You've probably guessed where I am. All the loonies end up in Nightingale. You may have read my story in the paper. I did, that's how I remember it. It was Sam who found me and wrote the story. I'm glad that my almost-death caused him fulfil his dream and have his debut as a journalist. My sister Beth brought me the newspaper. She and Yvie visit me every day. They tell me about you seeing as they're your best friends too.

Ward 6 has a window which has a view of the hospital garden. It doesn't open too wide, just in case. I'm the only person in the room; the other 3 beds are empty. I have some flowers on the table by my bed but I'm not sure of the sender. Sometimes I kid myself that they're from you, but my guess is that isn't likely. There's a nice nurse who looks after me called Kitty and she talks to me about sensible things like politics. She has very short hair and she's quite thin. The only thing I don't like is that she has to stand outside the toilets when I go, just in case. The food here isn't bad but it's not as nice as your cooking. I don't even get a proper knife to eat it with.

I know I've complained a lot, but despite my feeling a bit better I still feel empty. Every time I look at my arms I see the bandages covering the deep scars that could have killed me, but by some miracle didn't. Maybe I survived for a reason. All I read in the paper is that I was barely breathing and covered in my own blood when Sam found me. I knew what I was doing. The pressure was too great, and after you left I didn't feel I could carry on. It was the final straw when I heard you'd hooked up with someone else. I was so angry. I hated you for being with someone else...I hated him for being where I should...but mostly I hated myself for hating you.

I remember when you stopped loving me. We were eating breakfast together in our flat- cereal in those funny bowls with the cats in the bottom. It was simple but huge. You refused to touch my hand when you took the bowl off me for washing up. That's when I knew. We carried on the day the same as always, work, home, dinner, TV, bed, but something big was missing. I got the phone call two days later about my Dad. It was no surprise, he'd been ill for a while but to have two large parts of my life taken away in such a short time was unbearable. I took

more time than I should have off work which I suppose is why they let me go. I had no distraction any more, but I'd already lost you. The curtains began to close when you asked if we could spend some time apart. I was losing all the meaning in my life in such a short time. I knew that you were staying at Fiona's but I couldn't bring myself to visit because it hurt so much.

Beth sensed that something was wrong, so she began visiting me every day. Either that or she wanted to feel closer to family after Dad died. She didn't ask for a contribution for the funeral: she knew I couldn't afford to pay. Some days she would just come and sit and we wouldn't talk. She'd make the odd cup of tea and we'd watch TV but not say a word except "hello" and "goodbye".

The night it happened, she wasn't there. The last thing she said to me before *it* happened was "You'll be okay" I remember thinking as I fell down after the last cut "Beth, you liar" She's been really nice to me though, so I feel really bad. The last person to see me before *it* happened was Yvie. She used the key under the mat to get in. She dropped off some food from her and Beth, not knowing that I wouldn't need it. She told me that Beth wasn't there because she was "visiting a friend" I guessed that the friend was you. I remember Yvie turning at the door saying "are you okay" before she left. I mumbled a reply from my position face-down on the sofa which didn't seem to satisfy her because she came over and gave me a hug. I knew that she'd seen you because I could smell you on her.

That's all I remember. Next thing I knew I was in a white room, I could hear my heart on a monitor, there was a drip in my arm and Beth was holding my hand crying. I'm repeating everything I say now from that newspaper article. Sam came around to the flat to see if I was okay. When he didn't get a reply he used the key under the mat to get in when he found me on the floor smothered in my own blood. He thought I'd been murdered, he didn't notice the Stanley knife in my hand. He called an ambulance and the police. He tried to call my Dad, not knowing that he was dead, and then he tried Beth and got through. Beth went straight to the hospital and according to Yvie she wouldn't stop crying until I woke up.

Lola, as this episode has proved, I can't live without you. I need you in my life. Please reconsider and if not then I will try and learn to be happy for you.

With all my heart
Dave

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Dear Dave

I'm so sorry, I love you.