

A Letter to Holden Caulfield in *the Catcher in the Rye*

My dear brother Holden Caulfield,

Two years and thirty-five days. In a blink of an eye, you, my dear brother, have been expelled from FOUR schools. C'mon, I know you did that intentionally. For two years and thirty-five days, I've lived a life as an invisible. No one seems to be aware of my existence, and you people cannot even hear me. When I rest my hands on your shoulders as you were shaking in the cold winds, they pierce through in vain. Weird. It's pretty cool being a ghost, to be honest, except that I can no longer go see new films with you and Phoebe. Our good old days seem to be left behind. What you don't know is, I've been with you all the time, and I've got so much I want to say to you. I could go on for a whole week just telling my story, but unfortunately time only allows me to leave this short note for you.

The very first day I was freed from my drained body, I horsed around the city just for the fun of it. I got free entry into every single Broadway show and amusement park, just saying to make you jealous. I sort of liked this life, and I couldn't wait to tell you how amazing the feeling was. It took me quite a while to find you though, in the garage. I didn't remember us usually going there, especially at midnight. The moment I saw you, you were smashing everything hysterically. Your eyes have never been so watery, and your hands are bloody as hell. I tried stopping you, but you stubborn boy just wouldn't listen. I hadn't even begun bragging about my free passes yet.

No matter how loud I shouted at you, you seemed to be immersed in your own world. No matter how

hard I grabbed your hands, they broke loose and crashed right into the window. Then, I realized...I am DEAD. I'm officially a ghost now, like the ones in fairy tales--the good, kind-hearted ones of course. And things started to go down-hill.

Although you really did annoy me by flunking almost all of your courses, I approved of the essay you wrote for old Stradlater, not because it's about me or anything of course. I watched you type it word for word, and that was when I came to understand your craziness. Better put, your desperate attempts to resist growing up. My brother, the spring, it died with me, but there's always a next one after this winter. The wheels of life never does stop or slow down. All times, cheerful or sad, all pass by in different relative speed, but they never freeze like Indian people kept in the glass walls in the history museums. My history teacher's favorite quote is from Heraclitus, a Greek philosopher. He puts the quote right in the middle of the blackboard of his classroom. Not visually appealing at all. "One can never step into a same river twice." Every time you step in, the water that's flowing is not the same water, and you are not the same person. Indeed, something will change, and it will enforce some degree of changes on other lives. I never wanted to grow up neither, and I never will have a chance to. As we grow older, our freedom will be increasingly limited, whether by the environment or by physical ability. Everyone wants youth, but we only get to experience it once. So, enjoy what you have now, and if it's time to walk towards the next step, just go. I mean, it's not like you have a choice, but as long as you are present, you may always find a way to fit yourself in this not-so-kids-friendly society. There's no abyss as you imagined, at most it's a narrower path, still with delightful views and all. You know, there's not a single point in life when you cannot find the h word. Not hell, but hope.

It's always something good to carry around, sort of like the hunting hat you bought. It will protect you when I can't do my job no more. Yet the difference is, hope has to come from inside, from yourself, and it's not something I can bestow you even if you were muttering my name over and over, or bribing me with all of your allowance money to stay a while longer. Only you can catch yourself, Holden. I'd have to opt out this time.

But when you stayed in the tomb-like hallway in the museum, where the two kids were scared away, I just wanted to drag you out of here. You asked me what the meaning of your life was. Well, yes, schoolmates, teachers, nuns, cab drivers, might not get you or genuinely care about you at all, but that does not mean you are alone. Everyone has that feeling. Nobody fully knows me but myself, just like no one knows why I wrote poems all over my mitts. No one knows what I wonder about on Thursday evenings. Even Mr. and Ms. Spencer don't know each other that well, right? I mean, they sleep in separate rooms. Everybody is alone, and in that sense, we are not alone being alone anymore. The purpose of life is not having someone to care about you, but to take the chance and live through it. As much as I wanted to awake you from your depression, I can do nothing. Old Phoebe is my only hope, and yours as well.

Right before she reached for the golden rings on the carousel, the rain started pouring down. She put the red cap on your head, and that's when I know she caught you. Or rather, she helped you to catch yourself. I saw you folding the old, shattered part of yourself carefully, and tenderly buried it deep in your heart. I saw a relieved smile blooming from your face along with your new heartbeats and strength.

Your love for others and desire to protect innocence--those purposes of nobility and all, those are what made you a hero, my brother. You're living for, if not on, something bigger than yourself. I'm proud of you, and you need me no more. I shall soon be buried with all the pure, celestial memory.

The rain was actually pouring on me for once, and everywhere it touched, my body became transparent, gradually disappearing. The time has come. Before I leave you, I guess you'd like a proper good-bye. There're simply too many memorable things on your journey that it's impossible for me to list them all. You'd start missing all of them if I do. You would, for I, on the last second before I dissolve in this rain, start to miss everyone.

Love,

Allie