

Luck and a Letter

Based on *If Tomorrow Doesn't Come* by Jen St. Jude

Aren't we the lucky ones?

Those are my brother Peter's words, but my current thoughts as I turn to the girl sitting next to me in our cramped sailboat, on our last day on Earth.

She smiles at me, bright and warm like the sun. "I think you should read it."

"Cass, you can write?" I take the book from her with mock surprise, careful not to bend the flimsy cover.

An eye roll. "Yes, I can write, and I did."

"Sure...."

The scrapbook is heavy in my hands, messily glued photos sticking out. I open it to the middle. On the page, dated a few days ago and decorated with stickers of cats and smiley faces, is a letter addressed to me in neat handwriting. I pause for a moment, wondering if I was really supposed to see this much.

"Read it," Cass prompts me, noticing my hesitation, so I turn my attention back down.

Dear Avery,

I know you don't think I write in my scrapbook. I'm not sure you always remember to write in yours either, but I'll put up with the double standard since I love you.

So, the world is ending. In three days. And not because Teddy was yelling the expletives we taught him when your mom was in the room (again, I might add), or because Clayton didn't ask five girls to prom at once, but because of an honest-to-goodness "asteroid hitting earth and wiping everything out" situation. Actual death involved.

Pretty bad timing, if you ask me. I'm in New York- I chose to be, and somehow I left you, Avery Freaking Bryne, halfway across the country. I thought I might be able to make it back home to you after my show. Now I'm not sure. I'm so, so sorry, if I don't make it back.

But if I somehow do make it back, I'll be sure to let you see this letter, since you need to know:

I'm proud of you.

We love each other, everything for each other, and you're proud of me but how have I never told you I'm proud of you? I hope that you know I am, you've asked for so long and I never could say it before.

You should hear that now. There's (probably) no future, but there's the present. We should both savor it.

Love,

Cass

The letter is short, but it holds the missing puzzle piece. What my parents couldn't admit, what Peter couldn't admit, though I didn't care as much about that. I only sought the approval of the person in front of me, and now I have it. The world is ending, and I have it.

I feel Cass's hand on my cheek, and meet her eyes.

"Hey," she whispers, "Don't start crying now."

Frowning, I brush her off. "I'm not crying over your sappy confession," I lie, though I feel the burn in the corners of my eyes and the back of my throat. I fix my gaze on the sky past her head, blinking away the tears.

Her eyes soften and she pulls me into a hug, setting the scrapbook aside. "Okay, Avery Bryne."

I let her hold me for a moment, and then she taps my shoulder gently, pointing to the distant sunset.

Between the dying rays of the sun, a streak of light is visible, falling towards the horizon. A meteor. It's funny to think that such a pretty thing will kill us in so little time. And yet, I'm not scared. Cass is next to me, she is proud of me, and I am complete.

Aren't we the lucky ones?

Peter's words, but my thoughts as we make our way back to the house. We slowly climb down into the ruined bunker. I see my Mom and Dad pouring apple cider together, and Aisha and Ray playing cards. They notice Cass and me returning, and we all huddle together in the basement, laugh together, go on as if we are guaranteed to wake up tomorrow. It's not ideal, but it's how we are.

Tonight, I answer my brother's rhetorical question with certainty. Tonight, we are the lucky ones.

Tomorrow, we were the lucky ones. But I'm savoring the present, with a letter clutched close to my heart, right next to the girl who wrote it.