

Hate Mail



There's a
fine line
between
love and
hate



DONNA MARCHETTI

*To Harper:
Never let a mean letter dull your shine.*

HATE MAIL

DONNA MARCHETTI



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Contents

[Chapter 1](#)
[Chapter 2](#)
[Chapter 3](#)
[Chapter 4](#)
[Chapter 5](#)
[Chapter 6](#)
[Chapter 7](#)
[Chapter 8](#)
[Chapter 9](#)
[Chapter 10](#)
[Chapter 11](#)
[Chapter 12](#)
[Chapter 13](#)
[Chapter 14](#)
[Chapter 15](#)
[Chapter 16](#)
[Chapter 17](#)
[Chapter 18](#)
[Chapter 19](#)
[Chapter 20](#)
[Chapter 21](#)
[Chapter 22](#)
[Chapter 23](#)
[Chapter 24](#)
[Chapter 25](#)
[Chapter 26](#)
[Chapter 27](#)
[Chapter 28](#)
[Chapter 29](#)
[Chapter 30](#)
[Chapter 31](#)
[Chapter 32](#)
[Chapter 33](#)
[Chapter 34](#)
[Chapter 35](#)
[Chapter 36](#)
[Chapter 37](#)

[Chapter 38](#)

[Chapter 39](#)

[Epilogue](#)

[Acknowledgments](#)

[Thank you for reading...](#)

[We think you will also love...](#)

[About the Author](#)

[About the Publisher](#)

[One More Chapter...](#)

Playlist



- invisible string** - Taylor Swift 
- Now I'm In It** - HAIM 
- Mess It Up** - Gracie Abrams 
- Late Night Talking** - Harry Styles 
- Ghost of You** - Mimi Webb 
- Feel Again** - OneRepublic 
- Nonsense** - Sabrina Carpenter 
- get him back!** - Olivia Rodrigo 
- Someone To You** - BANNERS 
- I Wish You Would** - Taylor Swift 
- Motivation** - Normani 
- People Watching** - Conan Gray 
- Die For You** - The Weekend, Ariana Grande 
- Stuck In The Middle** - Tai Verdes 
- goodnight n go** - Ariana Grande 
- Kiss Me** - Sixpence None The Richer 
- Death By A Thousand Cuts** - Taylor Swift 
- Complicated** - Olivia O'Brien 
- Heaven** - Niall Horan 
- Back To You** - Selena Gomez 
- Paper Rings** - Taylor Swift 
- What if** - Colbie Caillat 
- This Love** - Taylor Swift 

Chapter One

PRETTY GIRLS GET DEATH THREATS

Naomi

“I think this is a new record. It’s only your second week on air and you’re already getting fan mail.”

Anne has this way of sneaking up on people, so when I hear her voice behind me, I swivel around in my chair, startled. I think it’s her shoes. They’re too quiet, even on tile. She smiles and waves a letter in her hand.

“I didn’t know meteorologists got fan mail. Should I be concerned?”

“The pretty ones do,” Anne says with a wink. “But, like I said, two weeks is a new record. Let’s hope your new fan doesn’t turn out to be a stalker.”

I take the letter from her and turn the plain white envelope over. My name and the news station’s address are handwritten on it. Anne watches me, not bothering to disguise her anticipation. I slide my finger under the flap and rip it open, tearing the whole envelope in half.

“Use a letter opener,” Anne says. She looks annoyed.

“Who needs a letter opener? My fingers work just fine.”

“You’re going to get a paper cut,” she says.

I don’t care. I shrug. “I’ve always opened letters like this.”

I reach into the torn envelope and pull out a single sheet of folded

notebook paper. The letter is handwritten. Short, simple, to the point:

Dear Naomi,

I hope you get struck by lightning and die in the middle of your next weather report. Wouldn't that be ironic?

—L

I bark out a laugh before I can stop myself. I try to stifle it, but now that it's out, I can't stop shaking with laughter. Anne frowns, then snatches the letter to see what's so funny. I watch through tears as her eyes widen and her face turns red.

"Oh my God," she says. "I'm so sorry. I didn't know what this was. I didn't – are you okay? Why are you laughing?"

I take a deep breath to calm myself down, and then pick up the torn envelope. I'm disappointed to see that there is no return address.

"Where did this come from?"

Anne shakes her head. It's clear she's confused by my reaction. "It came in the mail this morning. No return address. Do you know who it is?"

I nod. I can feel the smile creeping back across my lips. "I haven't heard from this person in two years."

My responses only serve to confuse Anne more. "Is it a joke? Or do you have a psycho stalker we should know about?"

"It's a long story. It's kind of hard to explain."

Anne pulls a chair from the next desk and sits down. "I have time."

I stand up, gathering my things. I'm done for the day, and this isn't a conversation I want all my coworkers to hear. "I was about to head out," I say. Anne looks disappointed. "Come grab a coffee with me? I'll tell you all about it."

Dear Luca,

I am really excited to be your new pen pal. My teacher says that you live in California. I've never met anyone who lives in California before. I think that's so cool! Do you go to the beach every day? I feel like that's what I would do if I lived there. You must love it so much.

I live in Oklahoma. I've always wanted to live somewhere close to a beach so that I can go any time I want. There isn't a lot to do in my town, unless you count going to the mall or to the river, which isn't nearly as nice as the actual ocean.

What do you like to do in California? Do you have any pets? I have a hamster, but I really want a cat. My mom says that I can have a cat when I'm a little older, but she's been saying that since I can remember. I'm ten now, and I feel like I'm old enough to take care of a cat. Or a ferret. If I can't have a cat, then I really want a ferret. What about you? Do you like ferrets?

Love,

Naomi Light

I was in fifth grade when I wrote my first letter to Luca. My teacher made us choose pen pals at random by pulling names out of a hat. That's how I ended up writing a letter to a kid named Luca Pichler who lived in California. I was excited to be making a new friend who lived in another state. I had never had a pen pal before, and I wasn't sure how I was supposed to end the letter. My mother had always made me sign all my letters with 'Love, Naomi,' so that's how I ended this one. It wasn't until after I wrote it out that I wondered if it was weird to write 'love' to a boy I had never met. I had only ever written letters to family before.

It was too late to rewrite the letter, and I didn't want to scribble it out and make myself look sloppy. Mrs. Goble was walking down the aisle toward my desk, picking up all of our letters on her way. I stuffed mine into the envelope