

## Dear Helena

Dear Helena,

You probably haven't considered it, but it's been one week and three days since my last letter to you. Although I constantly find myself engrossed in my studies or at the office, I am reminded of you as a trudge into my kitchen every evening. My faucet still drips. It drips, and I can't make it stop, and that's why I'm writing you this letter.

I thought it had stopped last Wednesday after the storm. The blizzard had covered the house in a cold silence. I could finally sleep. Although I couldn't leave my home, I'd finally felt free. The frigid air had brought a frozen death to most of the running water in the house, and even though I couldn't shower, it was beautiful and liberating. Without the constant patter of the droplets meeting the bottom of the sink, I could relax. I could read a book. I could close my eyes.

That was one week and three days ago.

Now that the snow has melted and the pipes are thawed, your image drizzles onto me and runs down my body until I am drenched in your absence.

Why haven't you let me inside, Helena? I've been knocking at your door. I've made sure to knock in the same steady beat as the drips in my faucet. I'd counted them out loud, just as I imagine you do as you prepare to practice your flute in the park. I know how you love it. I can tell by the way you talk about it, Helena. But As much as you love beats and rhythms, I hate them. I'm begging you for another silence, but not the type of silence you've been providing lately.

You probably think I'm writing this letter to confess my love for you for the sixth time, but I'm not. I'm simply asking for a check written in the amount of \$36.42 and

signed by Helena D Crow. That's the cost to replace the seat washer in the handle of my faucet. You broke it and I'd like it to be fixed, Helena.

Remember on November 16<sup>th</sup> when you stopped by with Dee and Rob? I remember it clearly. You all decided to put a kettle on the stovetop. The first step in preparing tea is filling the kettle with water, am I not correct, Helena? Dee was rummaging through the cabinets for honey, and Rob was setting out the cups. It was you then. You had filled the kettle with water on November 16<sup>th</sup>. You were the last person to use the faucet before the horrid dripping had begun.

You're lucky I took the time out of my hectic schedule to search for the address of your home a few weeks back. If I hadn't, you would be forced to come to my house to hand me a check in the amount of \$36.42. You'd have to come out in the cold, and listen to the drippy sink. You'd be reminded of the constant agony you've been putting me through. Luckily for you, I will gladly pick it up at the convenience of your front door.

You might be thinking that \$36.42 is a miniscule amount. It may be a miniscule amount to you, as I will admire the size of your home again today. You probably won't notice, as you've yet to notice the many kind gestures I've performed for you, but there is no stamp on the envelope containing this letter. *Well*, Helena, it's because I haven't the money for a single stamp. I've been saving up every penny for the new seat washer as mentioned earlier, thus, forcing me to walk to your house in the frigid weather today as opposed to simply depositing this letter at the post office.

I will knock as I always do, but I know you won't answer. I suppose I'll be forced to deposit this letter in the mailbox like the others. I'm sure it's because you've wrapped your furniture ever so perfectly in plastic, and you've swept your rug for the second time

tonight, and you wouldn't want anyone to come inside and damage the signature stamp of "Helena D. Craw perfection"

Well, Helena, I know exactly how it feels to have your personal property damaged (i.e. November 16<sup>th</sup>). But, because we're friends, I'll round the amount that you owe me down to the nearest tenth. If you could kindly answer the door and hand over a check in the amount of \$36.40 tomorrow afternoon at 3:30, I'd greatly, greatly appreciate it.

Your pal,

Chester.

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The cardboard castle began to rumble as Helen climbed through the hallway into the living room. She made it this time, without slipping down and landing on top of her most prized collection of plastic bags. They were yellow, and yellow being her favorite color, made these bags seemingly more important than the bland white ones that were kept buried somewhere in the room where her bed must be. Although she hadn't found use for any of them yet, she knew she'd be most proud of herself the day she'd finally find their purpose and become the world's most avid recycler.

Today Helen couldn't bear to even think about her myriad of collections or aspirations, she was most fearful that another letter would appear in her mailbox.

Although she hadn't received a letter in one week and three days, she knew that Chester didn't seem to be the type to stay silent for too long.

While making her way to the door, Helen stumbled upon a vast mountain of flute cases and accessories.

"Fuck!" She screamed in only a way that Helen D. Craw could.

Although Helen always hated the damned flute, she felt sorrowful at the thought of disposing any of the belongings in her home. What would her father think if he knew that she kept a living room full of cardboard boxes and colored plastic bags, but sent his favorite instrument to the landfill?

As she approached the door, she clenched the curtain to hold herself steady as she stepped over the pile of newspapers from seven years prior. She then peered out the window to check her surroundings. She looked right, then left, then right again. Although in drivers ed they teach you to do the opposite, Helen's imagination seemed to wander, and the voices in her head told her that if she didn't do it in a precise yet backwards order, something terrible would happen. She obeyed the voices, so nothing too terrible had happened yet.

After right, then left, then right again, Helen closed the curtain... But she repeated the order one more time just to be sure. From the window she knew it was imperative to count her steps to the door. If they weren't exactly eight, she'd have to go back to her starting location, and begin the journey to the door over again. It was just the signature stamp of "Helen D. Craw perfection".

Once achieving a perfect eight steps, each of the same distance of course, Helen stepped outside of her door. She made sure to shut it not once, but two times, just to be

positive it was closed. She also tried her hardest to peer through the window from the outside. She was delighted to know that it was impossible to see the contents of her castle.

She made her way to the mailbox, of course stopping along the way to catch a beautiful yellow bag that danced around the lawn, but she did eventually make it there.

When she looked inside, she saw it. She saw another letter in another envelope... Her nightmare had come true yet again. She was extremely frightened to see that another letter addressed to a miss "Helena D. Craw" was inside her mailbox. She wasn't "Helena D. Craw", she was just "Helen" without the "ah". The mistaken identity caused a sudden burst of anxiety and panic to course throughout her body. She sweated even though the temperature didn't call for it. She realized this, and at once her entire body froze, which was much more appropriate. She began to wonder what she should do with the foul and cursed letter! She took a deep breath and pondered her options. She could correct Chester, but that too made her anxious... Not that she'd seen Chester since the night she met him... But even if she did see him again, she'd never have the nerve to tell him that he's been calling her by the wrong name in his letters.

The voices in her head finally brought wisdom to the situation. They told her not to open another letter that wasn't addressed to her. She debated with the voices for a while, wondering if this was the correct thing to do, but then decided that they were right as they always were. The letter would proclaim the love that Chester felt for her again after meeting her just once over tea at his place.

She wanted to throw the letter in the garbage as revenge for the repeated offensive mistake that caused her such panic and dismay, but she knew that paper was recyclable.

What type of avid recycler could she possibly be if she had to carry the guilt of adding more pollution to the Earth? She decided it was best to carry it inside, and add it to her collection of Chester's love letters to a Miss "Helena D. Craw". She'd kept them right next to other rank and heinous things, like her flute and its accessories.

As she walked back into her home, she made sure to close the door three times. Once more for good measure because she noticed the envelope had no stamp. As she climbed back into the cardboard castle Helen rolled her eyes and thought, how could you love a woman when you don't even know her name?