

p.s.

Longer
LETTER
LATER

A
NOVEL IN
LETTERS
BY
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& PAULA DANZIGER

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ISBN 978-1-546-11912-8

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

24 25 26 27 28

Printed in the U.S.A.

40

This edition first printing 2024

Book design by Maeve Norton

September 4, 1997

Dear Tara-Starr,

It's 4:02 P.M. and I'm sitting in my room at the end of the first day of seventh grade, and I can't help what I'm going to say next.

I AM SO MAD AT YOU. WHY DID YOU HAVE TO MOVE AWAY??? I *THOUGHT* WE WERE SUPPOSED TO BE BEST FRIENDS 4-EVER. IF I DIDN'T LIKE YOU SO MUCH I WOULD HAVE MADE YOU MY EX-BEST FRIEND 4-EVER BY NOW.

Okay. There. I just had to say that. I'm not *really* mad. You're still my best friend. I hate that you moved away, but I know it wasn't your fault.

So . . . you want to know the highlights of the day? I get off the bus, I walk into Reston Middle School, and right away I notice that

1. Mr. Chimanto (however you spell his name) grew a mustache and it looks nice.

2. Mme. Simon got her hair all cut off and she looks like a boiled owl.
3. Joeline* *may* have gotten a nose job. No one can tell. (Here I sense that you would make some sort of nose/knows pun, but I'm not good at puns like you are so you can fill in your own.) _____

* Joeline Hammond, in case you don't remember.

Another highlight involves Karen Frank, Barf Queen of the Water Fountain. Remember how she has barfed in the water fountain on the first day of school every year? Well, she didn't let us down today. In fact, she let it all up. Again. And to make things even more interesting, she barfed right in front of about 15 girls who were all discussing Joeline's nose, and she *almost* started a chain reaction.

You know what I don't understand? How can the *Wheel of Fortune* home game have 400 puzzles but over 11 *million* categories? This does not make

sense, but it's what I heard the announcer say when I was channel surfing last night. (Emma and I are still not allowed to be Wheel Watchers. This won't change as long as Dad only lets us watch educational shows. The only place I ever got to see *WOF* was at your house. Now what am I supposed to do?)

Well, that's it for now. Write and tell me about your first day of school. I know you don't start until tomorrow. I guess that's one of the benefits of moving to Ohio. As far as I can tell, though, it's the *only* benefit.

Love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth". The script is cursive and fluid, with the 'E' starting with a large loop and the 'z' having a long, sweeping tail.

P.S. Emma started at Miss Fine's Preschool today and she hated it. She says she already learned everything on *Sesame Street*, plus, she doesn't like crackers.

September 7, 1997

Dear Elizabeth,

GIVE ME A BREAK!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

YOU KNOW THAT I DIDN'T WANT TO MOVE . . . THAT I WAS KIDNAPPED BY THE CHARENTS (my CHildlike pARENTS). . . . Oh, okay . . . I know that it's not kidnapping if your parents want to move and their kid has to go with them. . . . I know I should be used to it by this time. . . . Fourth, fifth, sixth grades. . . . It was a record for staying in one place.

Anyway, it was soooooooooooooo weird not starting school with you.

The night before school began here, I was soooooooooo homesick. . . . Not just for my old home . . . but for yours too. I kept thinking about how the nights before fifth and sixth grade we would go to each other's houses and figure out what each of us would wear for the first day of school. I was soooooo sad. I took out my copy of

the scrapbooks we made before I left and looked at the pictures Barb took of us on our first days of school. . . .

Fourth grade—you wearing that plaid skirt and the white blouse, loafers, and your mom’s pearl earrings. I had on my black leggings with a hole in one knee, my long black T-shirt with SAVE THE WHALES on it, my black high-tops with the pink fluorescent laces, and my mom’s black-and-pink beaded barrette.

Fifth grade—your *new look!!!!* Plaid skirt, white blouse, loafers, and your mom’s gold-and-pearl earrings. *My new look!!!!* The same leggings, more black high-tops with the same fluorescent laces, a black T-shirt that says SAVE THE HUMANS, and my mom’s clip-on nose ring.

Sixth grade—you wore that “cute” flowered sundress, preppy sandals, and your mom’s pearl nose ring (just kidding). I wore new black leggings (holeless), black sandals, a black T-shirt that said

IF YOU CAN READ THIS,
YOU’RE TOO CLOSE

and my dad's hoop earring.

Thanks for filling me in on the gossip. As for the pun about Joeline's possible face surgery, how about "Nobody nose for sure if she had it done. . . . It's snot something she's talking about." Okay . . . it's not one of my best puns, but since I've moved, I haven't had anyone to tell them to.

I need more first-day details. . . . So what did you wear? I want to know. I wore my black leggings, my long black T-shirt (sloganless), my red Doc Martens, and around my head I wore one of Barb's glitter scarves. (You know . . . the one she had on at "Back to School Night," when all of the teachers thought she was my older sister . . . not my mother.)

Anyway . . . my first day of school went okay . . . as well as it could with me being the new kid in the school, not knowing anyone, not knowing my way around.

A few of the kids made fun of the way I was dressed. One of the boys, Alex, asked me if I was a

fortune-teller. I told him that I could see a major disaster in his future if he continued teasing me.

School lunch was not only disgusting, but I had no one to sit with.

My classes are okay . . . except for the fact that there don't seem to be any writing classes. How am I going to become a great American writer (with our novels next to each other on bookshelves) if there's no time for creative writing?

By the way, I've made a slight change in my name. At first, I thought about starting out anew with a name like Mary or Sarah or Jane. Then I would change my look and my goals . . . but that didn't seem right, so instead of Tara-Starr Lane . . . my new name is Tara*Starr Lane. . . . Isn't that much more exciting looking?

I have to go now. Barb and Luke are going to be home from work in about a half an hour and I've got to set the table. (What wonderful meal has Jeannemarie prepared for your family tonight? Her herbed chicken? Her caramelized carrots? Her

chocolate parfait? *Our* dinner will be hamburgers, french fries, and beverages supplied by McDonald's and delivered by Luke, and cake prepared by Sara Lee.)

Love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tara Starr". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "T" and a star symbol above the "a" in "Starr".

P.S. I'm so proud of Emma for hating Miss Fine's Preschool. I'll never understand why your parents have to send their kids to a private preschool whose motto is THE PLACE FOR A FINE EDUCATION.

I've really got to go now. The Charents will be home any minute.