

***“Life is a game that one plays according to the rules.” — The Catcher in the Rye***

A large blot of ink fell onto the paper in her lap. She frowned and started a new page. The cold breeze swirled around her legs that dangled out of her second-story window as the golden sun crept up over the horizon. She leaned her head on the window frame, her pen carefully poised above the paper. The rustle of the leaves was quiet below her, the only sound for miles being the distant sound of city traffic and the scratch of her fountain pen on the page.

*Hello. She wrote. You would think there'd be a more original way to start, but I suppose not. My name is Jordan. If you are a friend or family member, you will already know that, of course. But if all goes to plan, the reader of this letter won't know who I am. Because I am leaving.*

Her pen trailed off the end of the sentence.

*Yes, I am leaving. For good.*

The faint sound of aggravated shouting echoed from downstairs, two separate voices, then the smash of something delicate being thrown. She turned to look behind her, back into her room. Her guitar sat in the corner, propped up against the wall, still tuned from when she was playing a few hours ago. She had been trying to write something on it, but nothing would work. No matter the tuning, the chords, the tempo, *nothing*. She had only just stopped herself from throwing the guitar to the ground in frustration, but she figured it wouldn't help with her parents if she smashed her hundred-dollar guitar. Not that they would have any right to be mad with her. Jordan saved up on her own for that guitar—working two jobs — her parents not paying a cent. They were too busy caught up in pissing each other off in the insane hours of the night to give her any thought.

A few moments passed, and she looked up. The shouting had died down, and there were just the muffled voices of her parents drifting up the staircase. Dark clouds crept over the sky. But... that wasn't all she heard. There was a layer of high-pitched chatter over the top of all the usual sounds. It grew louder as a trio of small kids rounded the corner onto her street. The sky was now a brilliant orange, and the day had begun, but the world still seemed asleep. Except for these kids. They seemed too young to be out alone this early, but it really wasn't any of Jordan's business.

One of the young girls spotted Jordan up on her window and waved, walking forward onto the road. Jordan waved back dryly. The three kids watched her, and she watched back. The girl beckoned her down. Jordan descended from the windowsill and onto the branch of a tree in her front yard, ignoring the gusts of wind that pushed the dark clouds further overhead. She climbed down and walked to the edge of the road, and just in time, too, because a car shot round the corner at that very moment, driving at full speed towards the girl. The kids screamed, and Jordan lunged forward, closed her fist around the back of her shirt and yanked her down onto the pavement. The car whizzed past, and the roar of the engine faded into background noise again. The sky went pitch black.

“Thank you,” she said softly as she stood. Jordan said nothing. They just watched each other in silence.

Then there was a flash, illuminating the girl's hazel eyes, followed by a loud crack of thunder. The heavens opened, and rain poured like it had never before. The children screamed with joy, put their hands over their heads like makeshift umbrellas and ran for the dry safety of their homes, leaving Jordan standing alone on the road as Zeus emptied the skies.

The girl who thanked her turned back and yelled.  
"Don't just stand there, you'll get soaked! Run back home, where it's safe!" Jordan smiled wryly and stood in the rain as the girl ran away behind the others. If only she knew.

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*Well, I hope this letter reaches someone who needs it. You may think you have no choice, but you always have a choice. The other result may not be pretty, but it's a choice, nonetheless.*

She turned from her desk in her small, messy room to look back through the window she was sitting in before. Her guitar observed her carefully from its corner.

*So maybe I don't have to leave. I really want to, and I probably will, but I suppose I should take some of my own advice and learn that I could stay if I wanted to. I don't feel guilty for leaving my family, and that's what's so scary to me. Probably scarier than the daunting task of finding a place to stay. But the world isn't going to wait for me.*

*So, to all the people out there who end up reading this letter, if you want to run away and start anew, like me, I wish you all the best on your travels. Just as long as you know what you're leaving behind.*

*Kind regards,  
A reckless teenage girl on a windowsill, watching the sunrise.  
13/11/2025*

She picked up her guitar and strummed a chord.

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She slipped into the library later that morning. Mrs Harris, the librarian, had just opened the door when Jordan ducked in quietly, envelope clutched under her arm.

"Back so soon?" asked Mrs Harris in that sweet, croaky voice of hers. Jordan opted not to reply; instead, she just strode over to her favourite bookshelf and grabbed a book. *The* book. Her fingers traced slowly over the embossed words, "The Catcher in the Rye," etched onto the hardcover. She opened the book gently and laid the envelope between the cover and the first page, the words "To someone who needs this" in her handwriting staring up at her.

She left the library, walking over to a large hedge across the road where her backpack and a bus ticket were stashed in a bush, waiting for her. And off she went.