

# Dear Mom,

Characters:

Melissa- mother, late 30s

Lily- daughter, 17

Brian- father, late 30s

Oliver- son, 5

*Note:*

*\*Trigger Warning- This show centers around suicide and the loss of a teenager. It also deals with loss and grief in upfront ways.*

*\*When the note is open, Lily's spotlight is up. It is only when the note is folded that she is in darkness.*

Scene 1:

*Lights up on a bare stage. Standing center is Melissa. She stares blankly into the audience. She does this for a while. Her breathing becomes more noticeable. Melissa looks down and takes a piece of paper from her jeans pocket. It is worn and wilted as if it has been there for 50 years. As she unfolds the paper, a spotlight comes up downstage left. In the light stands Lily. She holds an identical piece of paper. They take a simultaneous deep breath as Lily speaks, and Melissa's eyes follow along on the page.*

Lily: Dear world, If you are reading this, then I am finally happy. If you are reading this, then I am NOT a coward. If you are reading this, then I am gone. I write this note for what seems to be the billionth time. I've been putting this off because I wanted to wait for the "right time". Then I realized that if I waited for the "right time" I would be waiting forever. I'm sick of waiting. Is there even a "right time" to do this kind of thing? I'm not sure. I'm so tired. I'm tired of pretending like I'm okay. I'm tired of pretending like I belong. I'm tired of pretending like I am not a burden in this life. I walk around from place to place, haunting the people that surround me. I am haunting my own life. For years, I have been a ghost hovering above the living. I don't want to hover anymore. The world has slowly been dimming and losing its brightness in my eyes over the past few years and that is how I know it is finally time for me to let go. My heart wants to go to sleep but my mind is afraid of the dark. Afraid of what I can't see. My only hope is to leave behind people that are better and happier for what I'm about to do. I hope they don't cry for me, for I'm going where I belong. I hope they remember me the way I used to be. I hope they smile knowing the rest of their lives they will get to live without m-

*Melissa folds the letter abruptly closed and as she does this the light on Lily fades out. Melissa closes her eyes and tries to calm herself, with little success.*

*Lights down.*

Scene 2:

*Lights up on Melissa sitting in a chair center stage. She sits with her arms crossed biting her nail. She taps her foot impatiently. Evidently giving up, she reaches into her pocket and pulls out the letter. As she unfolds it with shaky hands, the same spotlight from before rises downstage left, illuminating Lily. They take a simultaneous deep breath as Lily speaks, and Melissa's eyes follow along on the page.*

Lily: Dear Dad, I am sorry I could never be your star. I'm sorry I was not coordinated enough to play sports or smart enough to get into an Ivy League school. You always said you didn't care about that stuff but I know I wasn't enough for you. Even if you could never admit it then. Even if you still can't do it now. I am sorry that I am not the strong little girl that you thought you raised. I'm sorry you will never walk me down the aisle or hold one of my kids, but please believe me when I say it will be better this way. You will be better this way. You won't have to carry me on your shoulders anymore, I promise I won't ever slow you down again. I love you and I'm sorry.

*Melissa sits in the chair, eyes working furiously over the page. She doesn't notice her husband, Brian, entering from stage right.*

Brian: Honey, you have to come downstairs and eat.

Melissa: *(not looking up from the note)* Gimme 2 minutes.

Brain: *(slight pause)* How long did you make it? Not looking at it?

Melissa: 20 minutes.

Brian: That's better than yesterday.

*Melissa's eyes scan the note, seemingly looking for something.*

Brain: Okay, Melissa, it's time to come downstairs.

Melissa: Please, give me a minute.

Brian: You need to come and rejoin the living.

*Melissa's eye jumps up to meet his with an almost betrayed expression on her face.*

Brian: I'm sorry, poor choice of words.

Melissa: *(giving a humorless laugh and standing)* I'll say.

Brian: *(approaching Melissa and rubbing his hands up and down her arms)* Hey, I'm sorry.

Melissa: I just can't understand. My little Lily wouldn't do this. It's not possible.

Brian: I know it's hard to believe. I do, but it happened, and there is nothing we can do about it now.

Melissa: Do you care?

Brain: *(pausing his arms on Melissa's shoulders)* ...what?

Melissa: Do you even care that our daughter is gone? That she was ripped away from us?

Brian: *(stepping away from Melissa)* Of course I do. How can you say that to me?

Melissa: What I am supposed to think? Our baby girl took her own life six months ago and you barely took three days before you were back at work. You were picking up Oliver from school and smiling with him as if nothing had changed. I am up at two in the morning crying because I can't close my eyes without seeing Lily, while you are sound asleep next to me. I feel as though I

am being ripped apart limb from limb every second I am here without her and you just seem to be fine/ with going on like nothing-

Brian: Well someone has to seem okay! Someone has to go out there every day and at least pretend like our lives are not over. Someone needs to continue to raise Oliver and keep him happy. I know you have been taking this extremely hard and I am *trying* to be sympathetic, but don't you dare, for one second, think that I don't love Lily as much as you do. That I don't cry over everything that I did wrong. Everything I wish I could change. That note you re-read 500 times a day? The one where Lily says she believes that my life will be better without her? I hate myself for knowing how I made her feel. For knowing that she left this world believing that my life would benefit from her not being in it. That is what *I* struggle with every hour of every day. But I have to go on. For you. For Oliver. For Lily. I refuse to let her death be in vain, and I refuse to let you belittle my feelings about my baby girl's suicide.

*Brain has worked himself up to tears at this point and Melissa embraces him as he breaks down.*

Melissa: I'm sorry. I never should have said that. I know you love Lily, I don't know what I was saying.

*Brian slowly collects himself until he is able to pull away slightly and look in Melissa's eyes.*

Brian: I know this is the hardest thing we have ever done, but we need to keep living. For Lily.

*Beat.*

Melissa: I'll try.

Brian: Just because Lily isn't physically here, doesn't mean-

Melissa: She is still my daughter, but I don't get to be her mom anymore.

*Brian embraces Melissa once more and we see her fold the note as the spotlight on Lily fades and Melissa places the note in her pocket.*

*Lights down.*

Scene 3:

*Lights up on Melissa sitting on the ground center stage. The note sits in her hands, folded.*

*Melissa looks around her before opening the note. As she does this, the same spotlight downstage left comes up, showing Lily once again. They take a simultaneous deep breath as Lily speaks, and Melissa's eyes follow along on the page.*

Lily: Dear Oliver, I know you won't see this until you're older and I'm sure that is for the best. I just want you to know that you are the coolest little dude I could've ever asked for as a brother. Sissy is just very sick, and I need to go to a place where I can be happy. When I am gone I need you to be a big brave boy. I need you to take care of mommy and daddy and be strong. Can you do that for me? I know you can. I love you little Ollie. And I am sorry I can't be the best big sister to you.

*Melissa sits center stage holding the piece of paper as silent tears fall. Oliver enters from stage right dragging a blanket behind him.*

Oliver: Hi mommy.

Melissa: *(looking up and immediately wiping her eyes)* Hi sweetie. What are you doing out of bed?

Oliver: Mommy, are you sad?

Melissa: *(smiling sadly)* Yes, sweetie, I am sad.

Oliver: Do you have ah ow-wee?

Melissa: Yes, I have a big ow-wee.

Oliver: Is it 'cause sissy not home?

*Oliver has reached Melissa center stage at this point and she gathers him and his blanket and settles them in her lap. She still holds the open note in one of her hands.*

Melissa: Yes it is. I miss her very much.

Oliver: Daddy says dat sissy is happy now. Dat she is in beddor pace.

Melissa: I hope she is in a better place, sweetie.

Oliver: Daddy said dat sissy toe me before she go dat she love me and I need to be a big boy.

Melissa: *(sniffs)* Your sissy is very smart.

Oliver: I got out of bed to be a big boy. To help mommy. Do you need a kiss for your ow-wee?

Melissa: Yes baby, I think I do.

*Oliver then leans in and kisses his mother on the nose. Melissa then hugs Oliver close and with one hand she folds the letter closed and Lily's spotlight goes out. Melissa breathes in her son as she continues to rock him.*

*Lights down.*

#### Scene 4:

*Lights up on Melissa center stage. She is pacing. After a prolonged amount of this, she lets out a frustrated sigh and reaches into her pocket. She quickly unfolds the note as Lily's spotlight comes up downstage left. They take a simultaneous deep breath as Lily speaks, and Melissa's eyes follow along on the page.*

Lily: Dear mom, (*pause*) goodbye.

*Beat.*

Melissa: ...

*Beat.*

Melissa: Goodbye. Goodbye. good. Bye. goodbye? GOODbye.... That's it? That's all I get?

*(Looking up)* Are you kidding me? Lily! What the hell is this?! I, I- I was the, I was the one who-, I- I, I carried you! I, I, I, I fed you. *You* drank life through *me*! You- I, I can't, You leave me! And with this? With this- this, this NOTHING! How- I can't, do you even, I can't- can't, I can't, can't breathe.

*Melissa sinks to the floor as she continues to mumble under her breath. She lets out a blood-curdling scream and is now crying so forcefully, it seems painful. When she screams, Lily looks to her mother, as if she can hear her. Lily places her note on the ground and leaves the solitude of her spotlight and moves toward center stage. When she is near her mother she speaks.*

Lily: Mom?

*Melissa looks up quickly.*

Melissa: Lily?

*Lily smiles.*

Melissa: *(beginning to stand)* Are you- Are, are you really here-

Lily: No.

Melissa: *(standing now but seemingly sinking back into herself)* Of course not.

*Beat.*

Melissa: Lily, why? How could- Why did you- Can you-



Lily: I was in the way, I was ruining every person around me one by one. You guys will be better off without me. Without me taking up space.

Melissa: Lily, you never took up space. You *lit up* the space. You made the space what it was. You helped make this family what it was.

Lily: ...

Melissa: If I ever did anything to make you feel otherwise.... I will spend every second of every day hating myself for what I did. How I made you feel.

Lily: No. I left to make your lives better, not worse.

Melissa: Any life I have without my children is not worth living.

*Melissa reaches for Lily but cannot seem to place her.*

Lily: I have to go now, mom.

Melissa: Wait! Let me take your place. Please! Come home to your dad and Oliver, let *me* go.

Lily: You can't.

Melissa: Well then let me come with you!

Lily: You can't.

Melissa: Then please, *please* tell me why you only told me goodbye? I need so much more from you. Blame me, hate me, yell at me, do something! Your letter left me nothing.

Lily: I'm sorry mom. I guess if I started writing to you, about all the things I was sorry for, all the ways I messed up, I wouldn't have been able to go through with it. I think that is the one thing I wasn't strong enough to do.

Melissa and Lily: *(simultaneously)* I failed you.

Melissa: NO! Don't you dare say that. Don't even think that. You are everything to me. I love you so much.

Lily: I love you too mom. But you have to let me go. You have to keep living. Please. For me.  
*Lily abruptly turns and walks back into her spotlight downstage left. She picks up the note she previously abandoned and exits completely stage left.*

Melissa: *(looking around frantically, speaking to no one)* Wait, WAIT, I wasn't finished. I WASN'T DONE! She needs me! She needs her mother! I need her! Please! Please. Please.

*Melissa is still holding the note in her hand. She stares at it for several seconds. She takes a few deep breaths as she kneels down. She folds the note and deliberately places it on the floor in front of her. She places one hand over the note and holds it there. Slowly, she removes her hand and stands, never breaking eye contact with the letter that remains on the ground. Painstakingly, she shifts her gaze from stage right to the letter. She breathes deeply and composes herself as best she can. She turns and begins walking off, slowly, stage right. Just before she reaches the curtain she turns back to look at the note. After a moment of deliberation, she quickly walks back to center stage, bends down to pick up the note and places it in her jeans pocket. She then turns and walks off stage right, not looking back. Lights out.*

*End of Play*