



“An Owl” by Adria Vega
2nd Place, Short Story 13-15

An Owl

My dear Connie,

I do apologize for defying your request of no future correspondence but I thought you might resent me more in the case of me not contacting you. I assure you I decided to write this only after much internal debate. To get to the point of this letter, a publisher reached out, sent a telegram. I've already informed him that you are no longer at university, taking time to pursue your writing and I gave him your address to contact you.

Also, I read your book, the copy you gave me before, well, everything. It's amazing, you should be very proud of yourself. I am. I will stop my ramblings here but I do hope you know that I wish you all the best.

Yours,

Cora

P.S. As inconsequential and trivial as this seems, you left your pen in my bookbag. I thought I should tell you, should you want it back.

Cora,

I just received word of your father's passing, and my mother and I send you our condolences. He was a good man.

Also I appreciate you telling me about the publisher, he has since gotten in contact, although he is requiring that I use a male pseudonym to appeal to a larger market. I admit some part of my pride wants to turn away the offer but I know that I'll take it anyways.

Once again I'm so sorry for your loss and I am wishing you and your mother warmth.

Constance Ames

P.S. Keep the pen, it holds many of our memories, it's practically yours.

Constance,

I apologize for writing again, but honestly I was a bit surprised you even responded, and I feel there are too many ties left loose for me to not write at least one last letter. Thank you for your condolences, but honestly it's a bit of a relief that he isn't in pain anymore. He'd been sick for months, we were expecting it.

On a lighter note, your mother and sisters visited last week when they were in town, which I am sure they relayed on to you. They informed me that you made a deal with the publisher, and I'm so pleased for you! I'm sure your book will be a best-seller as soon as it becomes available.

I also must offer my congratulations on your engagement to Mr. Allen. Your mother told me when she visited. He's a lucky man.

Also, and I'm sorry to bring this up, you don't have to respond to this, but I am sorry for what I said that day in the courtyard. I didn't mean any of it. I'd just learned of Father's illness, which I am aware is no excuse, but I find it very important that you know that my anger was never directed at you. I was angry at the world, at the doctor, at Father himself, for having the audacity to get sick, as if he had a say in the matter. But not at you.

Yours Always,

Cora

P.S. An owl has taken residence outside my window, in the big oak tree. It can be quite loud at night, but I don't really mind, it's hard to sleep when the house is silent anyways. Sometimes I speak to it when it gets lonely with just Mother and I. I'm anxious to get back to university and away from the haze of sadness that blankets the halls. I'm sorry for subjecting you to reading about all of this, I don't have many other people to speak to.

Cora,

I attached a copy of my fully-revised manuscript. I sent it off to the publisher this morning. I know you've already seen the original version but I thought you might like to read it. I rather hope you like it.

Thank you for apologizing. I knew you probably were upset about your father, but I did deserve some of it, at least. I had let my book consume me, and if I hadn't been so defensive I don't believe the argument would have escalated to the point it did. I am sorry, as well. I shouldn't have said the things I did and frankly I regret them. I believe we both made mistakes. Nevertheless, I am sorry.

As for my engagement, Father arranged it. He believes John will be a valuable asset to the family. His business could very well team up with Father's. John is no more excited for matrimony than I am, I believe. He is more interested in the business of it. I don't understand why he must marry me as opposed to Alice or Marie, solely because I'm the eldest. Either of them would much prefer to get married and settle down. I do believe John would let me attend university after we're married, though, at least for a year or two. It's foolish, but sometimes I think about running away, going somewhere I can write and maybe go to university. I think I could, if I make enough money from my book before I'm married. I could write to you, from wherever I am, so we can still communicate... The more I write this plan out the realer it becomes. I don't know if it's legitimately plausible or if I'm being cruelly tricked by my lack of sleep. I'd better get to bed. And in my tired state I am lacking much self control so I am allowing myself to write this one last thing: I miss you.

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Yours,

Constance

P.S. I don't mind hearing about the owl at all, and please don't apologize for talking to me about it, or anything else, for that matter.

Dear Connie,

I must admit I too am writing this letter late at night, curled up next to the fire. I just finished reading your book and I'm near speechless. It seems a bit silly but I felt as though I could hear you, softly, in my head, with every word. You are truly so talented. The owl can attest that I spent all day reading it and most of the night, too. The owl seems to be thriving, and quite content living here. I am as well.

As for your engagement, I'm unsure of what to say. I desperately wish I could pick you up and sweep you away from it all... Now, I believe it's my turn to succumb to the infinite possibility that seems to come with the night. I've thought about moving back home, attending university here in the city so I can help Mother manage the house, and to be honest I've taken quite a liking to the hustle and bustle of the city. I do hope this does not appear extremely

asinine, but you could move here too, to the city. You could attend university with me, rent a small room with the money from your book. Of course, you're always welcome to stay here, but I know you would likely want to be independent. Your family wouldn't have to know, or you could simply tell them once you're gone. I understand what you mean about not knowing what's realistic and what simply seems plausible at night. I am rather sleepy, so I think I'll be off to bed now.

Yours Always,

Cora

P.S. I keep re-reading the dedication. And so, in return, I dedicate this letter to you, Connie, my due north.

P.P.S. Vulnerability comes much easier, when the day has worn down our defense, doesn't it.

Nevertheless, I miss you too.

Dearest Cora,

You likely won't get this letter until after you've read my previous one, as I am giving myself time to throw this directly into the hearth should I come to my senses. I know I said I was going to bed, but I lied. Instead I am sitting at my desk, staring at the stars, and thinking of you. I am thinking of the way your nose scrunches when you laugh and your habit of sipping too hot

tea and sticking your tongue out to cool it off, as if catching invisible snowflakes. I am thinking of how your eyebrows twist when you're angry and trying not to be and about the scar on your hand from trying to make tea. I am thinking of how you named an ant you found on your dress, and were determined to deliver him safely back outside. I am thinking of you and wishing you were here beside me, giggling and making up new constellations because you can't remember the originals. I am thinking about you, as always. You are in my thoughts as easily and often as breath in my lungs. My dear, I am never not thinking of you.

With all of my love,

Connie

P.S. I am buying a train ticket after I put this in the post. See you soon.
