

A Letter to Elise – Paul Blake

Elise got into her bed and clapped to turn off the lights. She was looking forward to putting this day behind her and having a good night's rest. The light clapper was a birthday gift from her dad. She remembered hating the present when she first opened it; she was hoping she would be given some Urban Decay makeup like Gwen Stefani uses. However, on nights like this, she was glad for the convenience. She moved around on the mattress, throwing a couple of scatter pillows on the floor until she was comfortable. She closed her eyes.

Barely a minute later she heard the 'ding' of her phone as a notification came through. She opened her eyes and reached for the phone, the screen light making it easy for her to find it. In her hands, the phone's light went off, and she pressed the side on switch to turn the phone on again. The glare hurt her eyes, she blinked a few times to clear them. She placed her finger at the top of the screen and dragged down the notification bar. *It better not be Candy Crush telling me I have full lives*, she thought. It wasn't. The notification said that Chad had tagged her in a Facebook post. *He's probably apologising*, she thought. *He was a jerk today, and he knows he's made me pissed off with him.*

Elise clicked on the notification and waited for the Facebook app to load. *It's taking longer and longer to open, I'm going to have to get a new phone. Dad is going to screw, I only got this one six months ago.* Eventually, the app loaded and it took her directly to the post. She was expecting to see a long grovelling post from her boyfriend so was surprised to see just a YouTube link. No message, no emoji, no preview picture. Curious she clicked on it, and the phone took her out of the Facebook app to the YouTube app. The video was titled "For

Elise”, and a black screen appeared with the familiar rotating circle of dots. She turned up the volume on the side as the video loaded. The dots finished their tricks, and the screen changed. Elise could hear Beethoven’s ‘Bagatelle No. 25 in A minor’ playing in the background. She smiled, it was her favourite piece of music: ‘Für Elise’. She could see Chad sitting in his gaming chair in his bedroom. This is where he does his pathetic gaming videos for Twitch and YouTube, wanting to be the next DanTDM or whatever his name is. Chad was looking directly at the camera, his eyes were red, and there was a mark on his cheek. *I hope he is not getting spots, not this close to the Prom, Elise thought.*

“Dear Elise,” Chad said. His voice was hesitant and wavering. “I wanted to say I am sorry for the way I acted today. I don’t treat you the way you deserve. You are a goddess, so beautiful and full of life.”

He looked up towards something off camera. Elise could see his bottom lip quivering. *I’ve really upset him. Good. He was a total jerk today. I only told him about that guy asking me to the Prom as a way of making him jealous, making him spend more time with me instead of those silly games. I didn’t expect him and his stupid jock friends to humiliate the guy in front of me.*

She thought back to that morning when she was standing by her locker with her girlfriends. She was taking out the books she needed for the morning’s classes when she heard a cough and a voice say, “Errr...Elise.”

She turned around and saw Matt-something, he was blushing furiously and had his eyes fixed on the ground, she could see a couple of flakes of dandruff in his hair. He was in her Trig

class, she had noticed him staring, then looking away quickly. He was kinda cute in a nerdy, greasy sorta way.

“Matt isn’t it? What’s up?” She said.

Still looking at the ground, “Ummm... I was wondering... um... if... er... if... if you’d go to the prom with me. I know it’s stupid.”

He turned and walked away quickly before she could answer. She felt a little thrill, it was nice to be asked. Chad hadn’t asked her yet. And although she was definitely going with him, they’d been going steady for five months, he should have asked her. It’s tradition. She’d invited him to the Sadie Hawkins dance. At recess, she told Chad what had happened. She might have indicated that she was considering the offer, seeing as no-one else had asked her. She didn’t expect Chad to react the way he did. He raised his voice and told her that there was no way she was going to the Prom with that ‘fucking geek’ and how dare he even ask her. His attitude angered Elise. *How dare? How-fucking-dare? I’ll show him who fucking dares.* She stood up and walked across the schoolyard to where the nerds hung out staring at the girls and discussing, well she didn’t know what they talked about. She saw Matt sitting in the corner, his back to her, talking to his fat friend with the crazy hair. She went over to him and bent down to tap him on the shoulder, she saw his friend try to look down her top as she did. She straightened up and folded her arms across her chest.

“Matt, I’d love to go to the Prom with you.”

He turned, still refusing to look her in the eye, “W-w-what?”

“The answer is yes. I’m wearing dark purple so you can match the corsage. I look forward to it. I hope you can dance.”

With that done, she walked off giving Chad the bird as she passed his table.

During Study, Elise was in the library, doodling on her pad as she thought about the morning's events. *That Matt, although painfully shy, could be quite cute. He'll have to wash his hair and maybe wear some decent clothes. No one listens to grunge anymore. I'm fed up with being treated as second best by Chad anyway. We never talk. He's either playing his games or trying to stick his hands down my panties. I'm sick of it.*

The doors of the library banged open, waking her from her thoughts, then the sound of laughter, dozens of people laughing at once. She looked towards the commotion but couldn't see past the ring of people there. She got up from her chair and walked over, curious. She pushed past a couple of the crowd to get to the front. Once there her mouth opened in shock, her hand came up involuntary to cover it. Lying on the floor, naked, tied in duct tape, was Matt. He had 'Nerd', 'Loser', and 'Faggot' written on him in marker pen. *Is that his penis?* She thought, surprised. It was limp, shrivelled and surrounded by hair. She looked up and saw Chad there, surrounded by his football friends. A wide grin on his face.

"You still want to take him to the Prom?" He asked.

She turned and fled, Chad's laughter echoing behind her.

In the video, Chad was no longer laughing. His head was down, no longer looking directly at the camera. A tear, then a second, a third, trickled down his face.

"I don't d-d-d-deserve to live in the same world as someone like you." He continued. Elise thought his voice sounded strange, robotic as though he was reading from a script. "I don't deserve to live? What?"

The gunshot made her jump, its loudness distorted through the phone's tiny speaker. She saw Chad slump out of his chair, causing it to spin slowly around. There was near silence in the video, just a faint, rapid breathing sound. As the chair made its rotations, Elise could see blood on the wall behind. It was obscured by the backrest of the chair, there, then gone, then there again. Her hand shook, the tears in her eyes made the video blurry. A hand grabbed the chair and turned it, so it was facing the right way. Matt sat down. He looked straight at the camera. Elise noticed his eyes were a piercing grey-blue. She could feel them staring at her. Her skin began to crawl.

“Elise,” Matt said. “That piece of shit didn't deserve you. I don't deserve you. I love you so much. I have done for years. Watching all the undeserving jerks, you let put their hands on your perfect body has made me sick. They will never love you the way I do, they will never love you more than me. How can I show you? What can I do to show you I love you more?” He paused. Elise managed to breathe, she didn't realise she had been holding her breath. Her breathing was rapid, little gasps of air.

“I love you, Elise,” Matt resumed. There was a look of determination on his face. “I love you so much no one else will ever touch you again.”

His hand reached out and pressed a button on the keyboard. The video stopped. There was silence in her bedroom, then ‘ding’, ‘ding’, ‘ding’. A symphony of notifications made her phone sing. With her, still shaking, hand Elise brought down the notification bar, her friends commenting on the post. She touched on one of them, bringing back the Facebook app, in all its aching slowness.

“OMG! Elise.”

“Call the Police!”

“What a freck.”

“Call 911.”

“Now Chad is out of the picture...”

“911 now!”

“Get your dad’s gun.”

Elise heard the doorbell ring downstairs, then the door open, it always stuck to the frame so could only be opened with a jerk, which shook the rest of the house. Two gunshots sounded. Loud and violent. Elise dropped her phone on the coverlet, which was still dinging away. She swung her legs out and sat up. She could hear footsteps coming up the stairs. Another gunshot. Louder, closer. *Oh God Mum!* She stood up, her whole body shaking. Then she heard a knock on her bedroom door, quiet and hesitant.