Summary

When Betty Cooper wants to get over somebody, she writes them a letter and then she stuffs the letter in the back of her closet and forgets about it. In total, she's written four letters, and it's a perfect system, as far as she's concerned.

Until, somehow, the letters get out.

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Or, the To All the Boys I've Loved Before AU you didn't ask for, but you know you want. Now new and improved!

Notes

Hey y'all. I took some time to majorly rework this story so it's even better! Hope to be uploading a chapter a week. Enjoy!
Alice Cooper was in fine form the morning of Polly’s going away party. Something about the threat of social stress made the Cooper women crazy, Betty thought, a trait she was sure hadn’t skipped a generation. At eight-thirty, Alice threw open her younger daughter’s door with a shrill, “Betty, up!” and started barking orders for a last minute sweep of the Cooper residence.

Betty grumbled, burying her face in her pillow. She’d finally drifted off to sleep some time around three a.m. last night, her body too amped up with the anxiety that this would be Polly’s last day in Riverdale before heading off to NYU. The entire summer felt like a marking of many “lasts” for the Cooper sister - last summer carnival, last trip to the pool, last milkshake at Pop’s. Not that they were really true lasts. Polly could easily come home for the summers between school years, but Betty knew those summers would lack the intimacy of the last eighteen years, always being joined at the hip with her older sister.

The right side of her mattress sank as the sister in question flopped down onto Betty’s bed, curling into her side and breathing a deep sigh. Betty turned her head to look at Polly, hair still mussed from sleep, eyes half-open against the early morning sunlight. Perhaps she hadn’t gotten much sleep either.

“I think she’s lost her mind,” she murmured. Betty snorted.

“Yeah, fifteen years ago,” she retorted. Polly giggled, reaching over to play with a lock of her sister’s hair.

“I can’t believe it’s my last day,” she commented quietly. “It kind of feels like yesterday we were taking pictures in our easter dresses and Mrs. Martin was asking if we were twins.”

“Oh god, those terrible dresses.”

“So many ruffles,” giggled Polly, before turning a little more sober. “You’re gonna be okay, you know.”

Betty let out a hummed, unconvinced. Things in the Cooper household had never been rockier than they were this summer, and Betty could only see Polly’s departure making that worse. After their dad had announced he was moving out and getting his own apartment, everything seemed to have turned jarringly on its axis, and the more Alice pretended to have everything under control, the worse it seemed. Betty wasn’t sure how manageable she’d be without Polly there as a buffer.

But she smiled anyway. “I know, Pol. It’s gonna be just fine.”

By three o’clock, the party was in full swing. Alice had made enough food for the entire town, and it seemed to Betty that the entire town had, in fact, made an appearance at Polly Cooper’s Going Away Party, which wasn’t much of a surprise really. Polly was beloved in Riverdale - the golden girl, head cheerleader, model student. Everyone was pleased to see her leave their small town and go achieve her dreams. And boy did they drink to it. Even just an hour into the party, the adults were growing increasingly wasted. Even Fred Andrews had the red flush of someone who was holding one drink too many.

Betty lounged on the deck to watch it all, Veronica, decked out in a large-brimmed sunhat and big Gucci sunglasses, in the chair next to her, cups of stolen win in hand. Veronica drank hers with the
expertise of a middle-aged WASP, but Betty sipped hers more slowly, wary of her mother’s wrath should she catch any whiff of underaged drinking.

“I have to say, Bettykins, your parents went all out,” commented Veronica. “This is the good stuff.”

“Well you know Alice Cooper,” replied Betty. “She only does the good stuff.”

Veronica laughed, taking another sip of her wine, and turned her eye back towards the far corner, where Reggie and Archie were animatedly discussing some new video game they were obsessed with. Betty wondered which boy had caught Veronica’s attention in that precise moment. She and Archie had broken up about a week ago - a clean break-up this time, as they both insisted, as they wanted to spend senior year as friends - so generally speaking, this was around the time Veronica tried to find a rebound.

It was also around the time that Betty usually acted as a shoulder for Archie to cry on. It was always the same: Veronica and Archie broke up; she and Archie spent more and more time together along with several milkshakes at Pop’s; and Betty would begin to feel that damn butterflies reemerge in the gut, just in time for them to share one sweet, heartfelt kiss and for Archie to tell her he, “loved her as a friend.”

And then, like clockwork, Archie and Veronica would be back together within two weeks.

The system was tried and true, a game they’d been playing with each other since freshman year, but as she gazed over at Archie now - his sunny smile, that bright shock of red hair - Betty realized she wanted to sit this round out.

Before she had a moment to unpack the thought, the looming shadow of Cheryl fell over them, her hands, as ever, situated on her hips. Betty wondered if she’d taken a workshop on how to appear domineering.

“Ladies,” said the red-head. “You are cordially invited to the basement for teenager exclusive activities.”

Betty shared a look with Veronica. “You know this is my house, right Cheryl?”

“Yes, which I’m doing your job, Betty darling,” Cheryl retorted.

Betty rolled her eyes, lingering behind as Veronica and Cheryl began to make their way inside along with the other Riverdale high students. She didn’t think they had much to be worried about, as far as the parents went - an asteroid could have hit the back yard, and they wouldn’t have noticed - but one never could be too careful with Alice Cooper around.

“Betty?”

She turned at the sound of her name to find Jughead coming outside through the sliding glass door, Jellybean at his side. Despite the summer heat, he still wore his trademark beanie, dark t-shirt, and black jeans. Jellybean, likewise, had a flannel tied around her waist.

“Hey, you two,” said Betty, standing up to greet them. “I didn’t know you were coming.”

“Jelly wanted to see Polly off,” said Jughead, prompting an eyeball from his little sister.

“And Jughead refused to let me come by myself even though I told him I’m eleven now and I can do things by myself,” she muttered. Betty laughed.
“So rude,” she said. “I know for a fact Jughead went a lot of places by himself when he was eleven.”

“That’s what I said!” cried JB, but before Jughead could retort, they all turned at the sound of Polly crying Jellybean’s name and racing over to pull the younger girl into a fierce hug. Polly had been JB’s Big Sister through the Riverdale school district Big Sister/Little Sister program, and Betty thought if anyone was going to miss her the way she was, it would be Jellybean Jones.

“I drew you something,” said JB as she pulled away, presenting Polly with a hand drawn picture of the two of them. Polly squealed, holding it to her chest.

“Oh, Jelly, I love it! I’m gonna go pack it away in my stuff right now. Come with?”

JB agreed eagerly and the two girls rushed off inside and up the stairs, leaving Jughead and Betty to grin after them. Betty took the opportunity to study her Blue and Gold co-conspirator. She’d barely seen him all summer, only the occasional milkshake at Pop’s and only when they’d run into each other there. A wave of unexpected regret moved through her as she realized they hadn’t spoken since he’d gotten back from his road trip with Archie - a trip she’d mostly heard about from Archie himself, though she imagined Jughead’s take on the experience would be slightly different. In fact, she thought, it might make an interesting piece for their back-to-school Blue and Gold issue.

“So,” she said. “It’s been a while. How’ve you been?”


“Finished the next great American novel yet?” she teased.

Jughead rolled his eyes. “You know you’re gonna doom me by putting so much pressure on it.”

“I’ve read your writing, Jug,” she said. “Pare down on the semi-colons, and it’ll be a best seller.”

“Those semi-colons are a gift, Betts. You just don’t appreciate them.”

Betty groaned. “That statement does not bode well for your pieces at the Blue and Gold this year.”

Jughead smirked. “You just gotta learn to love me the way I am.”

“You make it so hard.”

Jughead’s grin widened, and Betty felt her cheeks warm. He smiled so rarely that she forgot sometimes how pleasant it felt to be the rare recipient of that smile. Briefly, she recalled the summer she’d discovered the pleasure, back when they were twelve and Archie had left to go to sports camp. The first time Jughead smiled at her, really genuinely smiled, they’d been in the treehouse taking turns reading Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban out loud. For the month that followed that stupid smile, Betty had seriously considered the merits of having a crush on Jughead Jones.

And then Archie had come back and popped that bubble immediately.

Pushing away her trip down memory lane, Betty said, “Wanna go downstairs? Cheryl’s holding court, which I assume means a rousing round of ‘Never Have I Ever.’”

Jughead rolled his eyes. “Great, my favorite,” he muttered. “Uh…is Ethel down there?”
Betty frowned. “Ethel? No, I don’t think she’s here. Why?”

Jughead flushed, shaking his head. “No, no it’s nothing.”

“No, come on, Jug, tell me,” she said. “You know if you don’t, I’ll just investigate on my own.”

Jughead groaned, pulling his beanie further down over his ears in that uncomfortable tic of his. Looking at her directly, he muttered, “I think Ethel has a crush on me.”

Betty bit down on her lower lip, stifling a laugh. She knew for a fact that Ethel had a long-time crush on Jughead. Frankly, it probably would have surprised him to know about the number of girls who found him “weird but cute,” Ethel making the top of the list.

“What makes you think that?”

Jughead’s blush deepened. “She just keeps appearing everywhere I am, almost like she’s… I don’t know… like…”

“Like she’s trying to set up situations where you two are in the same place so you have to talk to each others?” Betty supplied, remembering, with a little embarrassment, when she had used this exact tactic on Archie. Of course, setting up an “accidental” meeting with Archie had been easy considering they were neighbors.

“Yeah,” said Jughead weakly.

Betty smiled, taking pity on him. “She definitely is.”

Jughead groaned again, running a hand over his eyes. “It’s terrible.”

“I take it you don’t like her.”

“No!” said Jughead immediately, then blanched. “I mean, Ethel’s nice. I just…don’t like her that way.”

Betty nodded. She had suspected as much, though she’d never been anything but neutrally encouraging to Ethel. Honestly, the girl had chosen one of the worst targets for a lifelong crush, as Jughead had never taken a clear liking to anyone - male of female - at Riverdale High. For a while in sixth grade, Betty had thought he and Toni were an item, but when asked about it, they’d both laughed hysterically and said, “Gross!”

And since then, there’d been no one.

Smiling, she slid open the glass door to usher him inside. “Don’t worry, Juggie,” she teased. “I’ll protect you from Ethel’s undying love.”

“Why do I feel like I’m going to get mercilessly teased about this?”

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Long after the party had ended, Betty lay in bed, once again unable to fall asleep. This was a recurring pattern for the youngest Cooper, and no amount of sleeping pills seemed to aid her when her mind raced this way.

Having exhausted all her fears about Polly’s departure, Betty focused instead on her errant thought from earlier that afternoon: she didn’t want to be Archie’s brief rebound anymore. It wasn’t the first time that she’d felt done with being Archie’s proverbial place holder, but it was the first time
the revelation didn’t end in tears and panic. For so long, she’d imagined Archie as her destiny, the person she’d have a happily-ever-after with once they’d gotten over the nonsense of high school. Suddenly, that wasn’t what she wanted any more. Not in the slightest.

It seemed then that her letter must have worked.

She’d developed this system early on, back in the fifth grade when she’d had a terrible crush on Kevin Keller and no idea what to do about it. Needing to get it out of her system, she’d written Kevin a letter extolling her feelings for him and hidden it away. Three weeks later, the feeling was gone, and Betty deemed the system a working one. Every time she wanted to get rid of a crush, she simply wrote a letter and hid it in this old hat box her mom had given her, in hopes that putting the crush down on the page would alleviate it. So far it had worked four times: once for Kevin in fifth grade; once for Jughead that summer after sixth; once for Trev Brown after he and his family moved to Maryland; and once for Archie.

She’d written that last letter reluctantly, a desperate attempt to evolve into a person who could move on from Archie Andrews. After the junior prom, when he’d disastrously turned her down for the thousandth time, she’d rushed home and immediately pulled out a piece of paper, scribbling out all of her feelings for him onto the page as her tears smeared the ink. Then she’d stashed it away in the hatbox on her desk and left it to do its work.

Which, it seemed, it had.

Could she really be free from her feelings for Archie? It was true that when Veronica had called her crying about the most recent break-up, Betty’s concern had been mostly on her feelings. She hadn’t even bothered to assess whether she felt that usual thrill of excitement she got at the prospect of Archie being single. It hadn’t seemed important. So maybe, finally, this was all well and truly done.

Briefly, Betty itched to open the hatbox and re-read the letter, to see what words had released her from her childhood obsession. But it seemed like tempting fate, like reading those words again might open up the doorway for those old feelings to come flooding in once more. Better to let the letter sits there, like the evils in Pandora’s box.

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Monday arrived all-too-quickly, bringing with it Betty’s first and only school year without Polly. She dressed extra carefully in the morning to ensure she was putting her best foot forward. After the revelation of the weekend, she was certain senior year was getting off to a good start. No Archie drama, only one last solid school year and then off to college. She was right, after all, when she’d told Polly it was all going to be fine.

And then Jughead walked into the office of the Blue and Gold at 7:45, an envelope in his right hand, clearly marked with Betty’s handwriting.

Her letters had gotten out.
Chapter 2

The world slowed immediately around her, a whirring in her ears as she stared down at the letter clasped in Jughead’s right hand. He held it out to her delicately, touching only as much of it as he absolutely had to, as if it was some precious, timeless document. Betty’s vision blurred. This was it; this was how she died, right here in the Blue and gold office. Cause of death: absolute and total mortification.

Vaguely, she heard Jughead repeating her name over and over in muddy slow motion, as if submerged under water. Through her panic, she managed to lock her eyes onto his as he grabbed her by the shoulders, and reality came crashing down around her.

“Where’d you get that?” she asked in a jumbled rush. Jughead’s eyes flew up to his hairline.

“Breathe, Betty,” he instructed, rubbing his thumbs in small circles on her shoulders.

Slowly, she did as she was told, her breath returning to a more regulated pattern within the next minute. When she was calm, he let his arms fall back to his side, and Betty pathetically missed the contact, afraid it was the only thing holding her up. She yanked the letter from him when he held it out to her once again, pressing it to her chest as a blush conquered her face.

“Thanks,” she murmured. Noting the carefully re-taped envelope, she added, “Um, did you…?”

Jughead nodded, glancing away in embarrassment. “Um, yeah, sorry. I mean, it was addressed to me, so I thought…”

“Right. Yeah. Of course. Makes sense,” said Betty, wracking her brain to remember exactly what she’d written to Jughead so many years ago. Something about his hair and being way too smart for everybody else in this town, though the details were foggy.

As if reading her thoughts, Jughead cleared his throat and said, “It wasn’t embarrassing. It just seemed like something I maybe wasn’t meant to read.”

Betty’s stomach swooped in gratitude at his intimate understanding of the delicacy of this situation. And as he turned to lift his bag off of his shoulders and settle in for their pre-morning-bell meaning, she realized he didn’t intend to ask any further questions about the letter - neither the nature of it or why it had been sent to him. It was a little unlike him, to be honest. Not respecting her privacy - that was more than on-brand - but him not immediately trying to get to the bottom of a mystery, even if that mystery was why Betty Cooper had sent him a love letter six years after it had been written.

“Look, Jug -” she said, needing to have this all straightened out and squared away before they started their day, but he turn to her with a small grin, cutting her off before she could launch into a huge speech.

“It’s okay, Betty, really,” he said. “That letter is clearly from a long time ago, so I’m guessing you didn’t mean for it to get sent to me, right? You don’t owe me an explanation or anything.”


Jughead leaned back in his chair, his long legs stretching out in front of him, crossed at the ankles. “So, Editor-in-Chief, what’s on the agenda today?”
She’d met Archie and Jughead at the same time, though her friendship with Archie had been solidified more quickly probably due to their proximity to each other as neighbors. The Joneses hadn’t live too far, at the time, long before they moved into the trailer park, but it was a far enough walk that it made playdates less-than-easy on all parties involved.

It had been at a barbecue in the Andrews backyard that they’d all first become acquainted. Betty, age four, sat at one of the tables in her new dress, looking longingly out at the yard. Alice had been clear: the dress was a new one, and she needed to keep it clean. But Betty wanted nothing more than to grab Polly and climb up the tree.

Archie, with his bright shock of red hair, had appeared as if out of thin hair, stumbling right up to her to ask, “Wanna play dinosaurs with me and Jug?”

Betty giggled at the word. “What’s a jug?” she asked.

Archie pointed over to the dark-haired, scowling boy in the corner of the yard; when Betty looked over, he gazed back intensely.

“Jug’s my friend. Wanna play?”

Betty bit her lip, glancing over at her parents across the way. Following her gaze, Archie leaned in and whispered, “They won’t notice. They’re drinking they’re grown-up juice.”

By the end of the night, Betty’s dress had been ruined by grass stains, but it was all worth it for Archie Andrews brilliant smile.

The start of school provided a welcome distraction for the rest of the day, as Betty tried her best not to agonize over the possibility that all the letters - not just Jughead’s - had somehow gotten sent to their recipients. Jughead’s reception of his love letter had been dealt with gracefully - if a little hurtfully, Betty thought secretly, given his total lack of interest - and Kevin would simply laugh at her for having a crush on his closeted former self. Trev Brown wasn’t a problem, either, given he had moved states away and likely would never even see the letter.

Which only left Archie. Archie, whose letter was so recent and so painful. Archie, the only recipient she’d ever had any semblance of romantic involvement with.

Archie, who she was determined to be over.

There was also the matter of how, exactly, the letters had been sent out at all, and she spent a large portion of her math class making a list of every possibility, a list that ended up being very short and revolved around Betty sleepwalking or her mother trying to teach her some kind of twisted lesson. Betty wasn’t sure which would be worse.

Her Honors classes kept her out of the path of Archie for most of the day, while lunchtime was occupied by an impromptu Vixens meeting as ordered by Cheryl. For once, Betty was thankful for her dictatorship; at least she had more time to prepare for the inevitable awkward explanation she’d have to give Archie for the letter. Was it better in cases like this to tell the truth or lie through one’s teeth?

She hadn’t quite figured out the answer to that question as she gathered up her books to take home for the evening. As she closed her locker, Jughead slid into the space next to it, greeting her with,
“So I see you survived this last first day.”

Betty grinned. “Barely. Cheryl made us do like ten laps during lunch.”

“See, this is why I never became a River Vixen,” said Jughead. “Too much exercise.”

“Oh, is that why?” she asked with a laugh.

They were interrupted by Kevin calling down the hall, “Elizabeth Cooper!” The Elizabeth in question tensed as she turned to see him rush down the hall towards her, his own love letter brandished high above his head like some sort of trophy. This was the confirmation she needed: the letters had all been sent.

Waving the envelope in her face, Kevin asked, teasing, “Exactly what is the meaning of this? Have you been harboring feelings for me all these years? I hate to break it to you, sister, but I don’t think it’s gonna work out between us.”

Betty swatted at him, rolling her eyes and slyly glancing at Jughead, whose lips were pursed in that way that meant he was working through exactly what was going on. “Haha,” she said. “For your information, I wrote that when I was eleven.”

“Oh, honey, by eleven, we all knew I was gay,” said Kevin with sympathy.

“Come on, Kev, I didn’t understand the difference between a crush and having a friend who was a guy, okay? It was fifth grade. It’s a compliment.”

Kevin grinned. “It absolutely is,” he conceded. “The great Elizabeth Cooper had a crush on me? I’m putting in on my resume.” He pressed a kiss to her temple. “My one question is, why send it to me now?”

As Betty opened her mouth to explain that she hadn’t sent it at all, yet another voice, this one far less welcome, cried out to her down the hall. In horror, she turned to see Archie heading down the hall, envelope crushed in his hand. In a panic, she struggled to find an out, a reason to escape out of the hallway without having to face this confrontation. She couldn’t do this. Not here, not now. It was too embarrassing - to risky! She’d just managed to slightly, possibly begin to get over Archie, after all. What if this made everything come crashing back down?

Desperately, she looked at Kevin then at Jughead, whose eyes were trained on her face, a crease of concern forming between his eyebrows.

“Betty?” he murmured.

And maybe that was what did it, the tremor in his voice as he tried to ensure she was okay. Or maybe it was the way his letter had been so pristine when he’d handed it back to her that morning, as if he’d handled it with the utmost care. Or maybe it was simply her sheer determination that she would not let Archie Andrews hoodwink her into falling for him again.

Whatever it was, Betty grabbed Jughead by the collar and leaned up to press her mouth to his.
She was kissing Jughead Jones - *Jughead Jones*, the boy who’d put a frog in Chuck’s locker in fourth grade after he’d called Betty “dorky” - and abstractly she was aware that he was kissing her back. Not just kissing her: his hands, in the confusion, had found purchase on her waist, pulling her minutely closer. Or was she imagining that?

They were warmer than she expected.

They broke apart - who started the breaking, she couldn’t be certain - staring at each other briefly in the aftermath. She wondered if her eyes were as blow out as his were, the dark of his pupils overtaking the blue. Her hand stayed fisted in his skirt, as thought it might keep her from floating away.

Somewhere to her right, maybe in a different universe based on how far away it all seemed, Kevin let out a cry of shock, and Archie, who had made his way up to their group just in time to witness the kiss, appeared equally confused.

“Um,” he said, rapidly looking between his two best friends. “Betty, can I talk to you?”

Betty glanced back at Jughead, her eyes wide as she tried, desperately, to convey her desperation that he simply play along. The kiss had cut her brain activity in half, she thought, which might have been amusing if it hand't left her unable to focus on much but his hands still situated on her waist. She shook her head to clear it.


Kevin scoffed. “Oh, please, Elizabeth. Working on the school paper? Childhood friendship? All that investigating you two do together? I’m surprised you two didn’t hook up years ago.”
“Kevin!” Betty snapped. “We aren’t hooking up!”

“That’s not what it looked like in the hallway.”

She tried and failed not to wonder what exactly it had looked like in the hallway. Her crush on Jughead had been fleeting - the stuff of one wild summer that had ultimately solidified their friendship outside of their mutual love for Archie - but she’d still had a crush on him, at one point, however small. It was valid for her to wonder, even now, if they looked like they ever could have belonged together.

Or if it looked like Jughead had enjoyed being kissed by her.

“God, Jughead, I am so sorry,” she gushed, turning to him. He leaned back against her desk, arms crossed over his chest and a light flush in his cheeks but otherwise looking unfazed. So, no, she reasoned. Not enjoyable. “I can’t believe I just - I mean, I shouldn’t have - “

Jughead’s eyes widened in alarm, and he stood up as if to calm her down, the way he had this morning. Betty sucked in a deep breath through her nose, breathing out over a ten second period the way her therapist had taught her, and, though her heart continued its marathon, her head felt clearer when she opened her eyes again. She blew out a sigh, and Jughead relaxed back onto the desk.

Good. This was embarrassing enough; she didn’t need Jughead taking care of her twice in one day.

“I’m sorry,” she said finally. “I just freaked out when I saw Archie with that letter, and I just…”


“You’re really not helping.”

“You’re really not helping.”

“I’m just saying, how was jumping him supposed to help?”

Betty took a deep breath, her cheeks on fire. “I just - I guess, I didn’t want Archie to think that I still had feelings for him, and my brain short-circuited to the worst possible solution because obviously that letter indicates that I did have feelings for him. Not that long ago.” She glanced over at Jughead once more. “I owe you like a whole month’s worth of baked goods.”

Jughead grinned at that, his eyes sparkling at the suggestion. “You’re forgiven, but only if you make it a year,” he said.

“Deal,” said Betty, grateful for his understanding. Kevin, however, wasn’t satisfied.

“Wait,” he said as realization dawned on him. “Archie also got a love letter? And here I thought I was special.”

“You are special, Kev,” Betty assured him. “But in this case…”

“I got one too,” said Jughead, and Kevin let out an indignant huff.

“Three love letters? You’re a regular Casanova, Betty Cooper,” he said.

“Four.”

“What?”

“I also wrote one to Trev Brown,” explained Betty. “But none of you were ever supposed see any of them. They were just supposed to be for me.” At Kevin’s dubious look, Betty sighed and
launched into a further explanation. “It’s this - system I have. Any time I have a crush, and I want
to get over it, I just write a letter to get all my feelings out and then I hide it away in this hatbox
and then - poof! - the feelings disappear.”

“And that works?”

“Well, I don’t have a crush on you anymore, do I, Kev?”

“Touche, Cooper. Though I wouldn’t blame you if you did. I’m a snack.”

Jughead sat up straighter at the desk, catching the scent of a mystery. “So, if you didn’t send the
letters, who did?”

“I’ve been trying to figure that out all day,” said Betty, wrapping a loose string from the edge of her
sweater around her index finger. Her palms were starting to sweat as she struggled to keep from
digging her nails into them. “The only explanation I can think of is maybe my mom sent them.”

“Without asking you?”

“That woman is a witch,” offered Kevin sympathetically. “But why freak out over Archie? I
thought you two were endgame, boo.”

Betty sucked in a deep breath, stealing herself. She could feel Jughead’s gaze intense on the side of
her face as she said, “I’m trying to put all that Archie stuff behind me this year,” she admitted. “I’m
sort of sick of being hung up and him. That’s why I wrote that letter, so I could…move on.”

Kevin let out a whistle. “Wow, sis. I gotta day, that’s a big move. I’m proud of you.”

“Thanks, Kev.”

“So...exactly what are you gonna tell Archie?”

Betty made a face. “The truth, I guess.”

But the truth could wait until tomorrow. Betty raced home as quickly as she could, bursting
through the front door and taking the steps two at a time until she’d reach her bedroom. Her hands
shaking with adrenaline, she yanked open her hatbox, unmoved on her desk, and confirmed what
she already knew: the letters were no longer there.

Without even stopping to drop her backpack on the floor, she tore down the steps again, crying out
for her mom.

“Mom? Mom!”

Alice stood in the chicken, ready to put a roast in the oven, a meal far too large for just the two of
them.

“Did you send my letters?” she asked, frantic. Alice frowned at her, bewildered.

“What? Honey, what letters?”

It was a genuine enough response that Betty’s heart began to slow its pace. If Alice had done this,
she would certainly have taken ownership of it, smugly announced to Betty that this was the only
way she’d learn some absurd lesson about not leaving things lying around.
But if not her mom, then how had this happened?

“Honey, what’s wrong? Did you run all the way home?” asked Alice, stepping towards her daughter to more closely observe the flush in her cheeks.


She rushed back up the stairs to her room once more, leaving Alice alone with the roast.

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For the third night in a row, Betty lay up late into the night, turning the days events over in her head once more. Despite the copious amounts of Nancy Drew she’d read as a kid, she felt lost at where to even begin with this mystery. She had no motives, few suspects, and a significant lack of hunches to go on. She longed to talk to Polly, to ask her advice about how to approach this awkward Archie situation, but Betty wouldn’t even know where to begin to explain the whole thing to her. Polly didn’t know about the letters, and if their roles were reversed, Betty was sure, her sister would have been dating Archie Andrews a long time ago. Polly was far more socially savvy than Betty had ever been.

Reaching over to her bedside table, Betty picked up her phone, groaning as the time flashed back up at her. 1:47 A.M. Tomorrow was going to be hell, especially if she had to have this talk with Archie. She unlocked her phone and opened her messages, hovering anxiously over her text thread with the boy next door. Thinking better of it, she opened up a different thread instead, this one further down in her recent messages.

*Sorry about today.*

She hit send, setting the phone down in her lap. It buzzed a few moments later, lighting up with Jughead’s reply: *you apologize too much*

Betty grinned at the response and began to type back when the ellipses bubble popped up, indicating he had more to say.

*you know what says ‘I’m sorry’?*

And then quickly after:

*choc chip cookies*

Betty giggled, quickly typing back, *I’ll make some this weekend.*

Jughead’s response came in a few seconds later, a drooling emoji, quickly followed by: *you don’t have to though. it wasn’t so bad, really.*

It wasn’t a compliment, not really, but Betty was still glad Jughead wasn’t there to see her cheeks turn bright red.

Chapter End Notes

* yaaaaaaay social distancing, amirite? means I have all the time in the world to write now, so here you go!
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