

It's almost the weekend... it's time for some fun!

#FridayFunday

If you love Nicholas Sparks' bestselling novel *The Notebook*, you will devour this compelling, emotional storytelling. It will make you laugh, and it will make you cry.

*If the love of your life had no memory of you . . .
What would you do?*

JODI
PERRY

Nineteen Letters



Available from 29 August 2017

What would you do if the love of your life had no memory of you? A man tries to win back the love of his life after an accident has her in a coma in this emotional, romantic drama from #1 ebook phenomenon J. L. Perry writing as Jodi Perry.

The 19th of January, 1996 . . . I'll never forget it. It was the day we met. I was seven and she was six. It was the day she moved in next door, and the same day I developed my first crush on a girl.

Then tragedy struck. Nineteen days after our wedding day, she was in an accident that would change our lives forever. When she woke from her coma, she had no memory of me, of us, of the love we shared.

That's when I started writing her letters. The stories of our life. Of when we met. About the happier times, and everything we'd experienced together.

What we had was far too beautiful to be forgotten.

PROLOGUE

Nineteen. There's something about that number; it not only brought us together, bonding us forever, it also played a hand in tearing us apart.

The nineteenth of January 1996. I'll never forget it. It was the day we met. I was seven and she was six. It was the day she moved in next door, and the day I developed my first crush on a girl.

Exactly nineteen years later, all my dreams came true when she became my wife. She was the love of my life. My soul mate. My everything. The reason I looked forward to waking up every morning.

Then tragedy struck. Nineteen days after we married, she was in an accident that would change our lives forever. When she woke from her coma, she had no memory of me, of us, of the love we shared.

I was crushed. She was my air, and without her I couldn't breathe.

The sparkle that once glistened in her eyes when she looked at me was gone. To her, now, I was a stranger. I had not only lost my wife, I had lost my best friend.

But I refused to let this tragedy be the end of us. That's when I started to write her letters, stories of our life. Of when we met.

About the happier times, and everything we had experienced together.

What we had was far too beautiful to be forgotten.

This is our story . . .

ONE

Jemma

It's a wet and dreary morning is the first thing I hear when the radio booms to life, alerting me to the fact it's time to get up.

Dreary doesn't even come close. The thought of no longer being able to spend every waking minute with my gorgeous husband has already put a dampener on my day. I can't believe our time off together has come to an end. I hate that I have to go back to work this morning, and leave the little bubble Braxton and I have been living in for the past four weeks.

Right up until the wedding, things were so busy with our careers, building our dream house and organising our special day. Everything combined seemed to take away from us being together. This one-on-one time we've had since tying the knot was just what we both needed.

'Morning, Mrs Spencer.'

He rolls onto his side, pulling me further into his warm, luscious body. It has been exactly nineteen days since we exchanged wedding vows, and I'm still floating.

'Morning, Mr Spencer.' I lean my forehead against his. 'I'm not ready to go back to work. I can't stand the thought of spending the entire day without you.'

He chuckles as his teeth nip at my pouting lip. 'I feel exactly the same way, babe. Our time off has gone way too quick. We should have taken two months off, instead of one.' Despite him being a constant figure in my daily life, for the past nineteen years, I still get a rush when I think about what our future together holds.

I met Braxton when my parents and I moved in next door. We were just kids, but we've been inseparable ever since. He's my one and only. He always has been, and always will be. He's not only the love of my life; he's my best friend, my soul mate, my forever boy.

He's incredibly dreamy, with his movie-star looks. I run my fingers through his sandy blond hair as my eyes roam over his perfectly sculpted face; his big blue eyes pop against his tanned skin. He has a smile that makes my knees weak. His front tooth turns in ever so slightly, but it takes nothing away from his Colgate-worthy smile.

When he realises I'm checking him out, the sexy grin that I adore appears on his face. It highlights the cute dimple in his left cheek. To this day, he still manages to turn my insides to mush, but it's his inner beauty that affects me the most.

'I could always call in sick,' I say, perking up for a moment, but in reality I know it's not possible. I have a big client coming in, and I need to prepare.

'If I didn't have this damned meeting later this morning, I'd say do it,' he replies, smiling.

'I'm going to miss you.'

'I'm going to miss you too, Jem. The past four weeks have been my kind of heaven.'

I sigh. 'I'd give anything to be back in Kauai right now.'

My fingers move from his hair and skim down the side of his face as I speak. The beach has always been our favourite place. That's why we built our dream home overlooking the ocean. The soothing sound of the waves crashing against the shore as I drift off to sleep

every night, and the sweet smell of sea air first thing in the morning . . . it's cathartic. It's also one of the reasons we chose Hawaii—a beautiful villa on the majestic shores of Tunnels Beach—as the place to spend the first two weeks of our married life.

'Me too.' He gives me a wishful look. 'I'll take you back there over the Christmas break, I promise.'

'I'd like that.' My fingertips dance over his collarbone, before moving across his shoulder. When I run a path down his strong back, he groans.

I sigh again when I think that Christmas is ten months away, but I guess we have the rest of our lives together to create the kind of memories we did in Hawaii.

Untangling my legs from his, I pause briefly. I don't want to leave him. I exhale a drawn-out breath. 'I suppose I better jump in the shower.'

'Would you like some company?'

Reaching for me, he rolls onto his back, taking me with him. I laugh when he wiggles his eyebrows. I straddle his waist before covering his mouth with mine. My shower can wait. Making love to my man is much more important.

Sliding forward, I line myself up. His strong hands grip my hips, and we moan in unison as I sink down onto him.

My eyes lock with his as I slowly rock my body against him. 'I love you, Brax.'

'I love you too, Jem. So much.'

He reaches for my hands, lacing his fingers through mine. We've always had such a strong bond, but when we're connected like this, we become one. I'll never tire of these feelings he evokes in me.

There are times I feel guilty because together, we're perfect. None of our friends have the kind of relationship Braxton and I do. What we have is unbreakable. Sometimes my feelings for him overwhelm me. I'm not sure how either of us would survive without the other.

Our love is the purest of pure.

As I rush around putting the finishing touches on my make-up, I catch a glimpse of Braxton in the mirror. He's leaning up against the doorframe watching me get ready. He's shirtless and wearing a pair of grey sweats that hang low on his hips. My pulse quickens as my eyes rake over his bare chest, and each delicious muscle that defines his torso, from the perfect V just above the waistband, right up to his washboard abs. One of my favourite things to do is watch him work out on the small home gym he set up in the garage. I don't think he even realises how sexy he is. Growing up, he didn't notice the way all the girls swooned over him. But I did.

My eyes move back to his, and the adoring look on his face sends my heart into a flutter. The sheer love I feel for this man consumes every fibre of my being. It's euphoric.

'How long have you been standing there?' I ask as my mouth curves into a smile.

'I'm just admiring my beautiful wife.' I love hearing him call me his wife.

He pushes off the doorframe and stalks towards me. When his arms encircle my waist, he pulls me back into him. A soft moan falls from my mouth as his lips trail a path up my neck. I tilt my head to the side, allowing him better access.

'I'm already running late,' I breathe.

'I wish you didn't have to go.' His warm breath on my skin leaves goosebumps in its wake.

'Me either.'

'The next eight hours are going to feel like an eternity.' I sigh in agreement. 'I know.'

His tongue glides over the sensitive spot behind my ear, sending shivers down my spine. He did that on purpose. 'Don't make any plans for tonight, because I'm taking you out to dinner.'

'You're taking me out? Where?'

'The Sea Shanty.' He groans as he sucks my earlobe into his mouth.

‘What’s the special occasion?’

‘Our anniversary.’

My eyes fly open to meet his in the mirror. ‘Our what?’ My mind starts to race. *What anniversary?*

He turns me in his arms so I’m facing him, and pulls a small black box from his pocket. ‘I was going to give this to you tonight, but I want you to have it now. Happy nineteenth anniversary, sweetheart.’

My hands tremble slightly as I take hold of the box. That’s when I realise that today we have been married for nineteen days, and a huge smile breaks out on my face. The number nineteen has always held special significance for us.

Tears of happiness pool in my eyes as I open the lid. Inside I find a white-gold necklace that’s holding a diamond-encrusted number-nineteen pendant.

‘Oh Braxton, it’s beautiful. I love it . . . I love you.’

He smiles as he tucks a lock of hair behind my ear. ‘I can’t wait to spend the rest of my life with you, Jem.’

‘Same.’

A lump forms in my throat and I feel like I’m choking back the tears. I use my hand to fan my eyes; I don’t have time to re-do my make-up.

Taking the box out of my hand, he removes the necklace. ‘Turn around, and hold up your hair.’ I do as he asks, gathering my long brown hair on top of my head so he can fasten the necklace. ‘Perfect,’ he says, planting a soft kiss on my skin at the base of my neck.

My fingertips glide over the pendant as I admire it in the mirror. ‘Thank you . . . I’ll treasure it.’

Sliding his arms around my waist again, he rests his chin on my shoulder, and his eyes meet mine in the mirror. ‘You know, I’ve been thinking . . .’

‘That could be dangerous.’

I laugh when he pokes my side.

'I want you to stop taking the pill.'

I feel my heartbeat accelerate as I swing around to face him. 'You do?'

'Yes. It's time we gave it another try, Jem. I want to see our baby growing inside you.'

I swipe my finger under my eye to catch the stray tear that has fallen. 'I want that too, but what about my job? We just took out a second mortgage to build this house . . . we need the money.'

He exhales before continuing. 'I know how much your career means to you, but you're giving so much of yourself to that bastard, Andrew. We both know he doesn't appreciate you. Why don't you think about setting up your own interior design business from home? That way you'd be here to look after our son, and still be able to do what you love.'

'Or our daughter,' I say with a smile.

'As long as our baby is healthy, I don't care what sex it is.'

I bow my head as memories of that day flood my mind. I want this so badly, but I'm scared.

'Can we talk more about it tonight over dinner? Andrew's going to chew me out if I don't get to the office soon.'

'He better not!'

I run my finger over his forehead, trying to flatten out the crinkles of his frown. I love how protective he is. He hates the way my boss treats me, but he'd never interfere because he knows how much I love what I do.

The rain has eased by the time I'm ready to leave, but Braxton still insists on walking me out so I don't get wet. 'Bye,' I say reluctantly, when we come to a stop beside my car.

'Don't let Andrew keep you any later than needed.'

'I won't,' I say, placing my lips against his. 'Good luck with your meeting. They're going to love the new plans.'

'I hope so.' He opens the driver's side door, and moves the umbrella closer to shield me from the rain. 'Be careful on the roads, they'll be slippery.'

‘I will. Stop worrying.’

‘I’ll always worry where you’re concerned, Jem. It’s my job to look after you.’

I smile up at him once I’m seated. ‘I love how much you love me.’

‘That’ll never change,’ he says, winking, as he closes my car door.

My heart feels heavy as I blow him a kiss and reverse out of the driveway . . . I miss him already.

I’m driving cautiously but still faster than usual on my way to work. I know I shouldn’t, considering the roads are slippery from all the rain, but the backlog of work I’m going to face from being on holidays for a month is making my stomach knot. Just the thought of facing Andrew in one of his moods this morning is quickly undoing all the calm I’ve felt while being away from him. Braxton’s idea of starting my own business is sounding better by the second.

I smile to myself as I replay his words in my head. My fingertips lightly skim over my stomach. I’d like nothing more than to have his baby growing inside me again.

‘Shit,’ I mumble to myself when the heavens open up. I turn the wiper speed up to full, but my visibility is still poor. I can barely see the car in front of me now. I jump when my phone starts to ring. I grip the wheel tightly with my right hand as I reach across the passenger seat, my hand blindly fumbling in my bag as I try to find it.

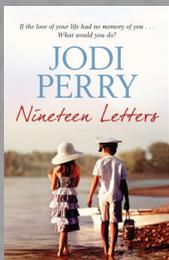
I just know that it’s Andrew wondering where I am; I should have been there fifteen minutes ago. My chest tightens just thinking about it.

My eyes leave the road for a split second as I glance down at the screen. I was right, it’s him. As I attempt to accept the call, I hear the loud sound of an angry horn, and the screech of tyres. My head snaps to the left as my body is thrown violently sideways. The sickening crunching sound of metal is almost deafening.

Images of Braxton and our life together flash through my mind as a crushing sensation consumes the right side of my body. My head connects with the driver's-side window, and the sound of shattering glass fills my ears.

Oh god. I don't want to die.

'Braxton . . . Braaaax,' I cry out as the world around me stills, and I succumb to the darkness.



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by Jodi Perry

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