

It's almost Christmas... so here's a little gift from Jodi Perry! A bonus chapter from her incredible novel, *Nineteen Letters*.

#Blissmas

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.

BONUS CHAPTER

'I want to stay with my baby brother,' Grace says scowling, as I lean over and strap her into her car seat. I try to mask my smile when she crosses her arms over her chest in defiance. She may look like me, but she inherited her stubbornness from her mother.

'I know, Princess, so do I, but Bailey and Mummy need their rest. I'll bring you back to the hospital first thing in the morning, I promise.'

She doesn't speak another word, but when I see her bottom lip start to quiver and tears fill her big blue eyes, it tugs at my heart. Poor thing. I hate seeing her upset. Although she's almost four, she's still too little to understand. She's been eagerly awaiting her brother's birth ... just like Jem and I have.

Bringing my face forward, I plant a soft kiss on her cheek. 'Don't cry, sweetheart,' I say, raising my hand and gently wiping the lone tear that leaks from her eye. 'Two more sleeps and Mummy should be able to bring your baby brother home.'

'Forever?'

'Yes ... forever.' I smile when I see the corner of her lips curve up. 'And tonight you get to sleep at Ma and Pa's ... You'll have lots of fun. Ma even made your favourite cupcakes.' Christine and Stephen love having her stay over.

'Yay! Cupcakes,' she squeals, clapping her hands with

excitement. It makes me chuckle. She has a sweet tooth just like me. 'Can my baby brother sleep in my bed with me when he comes home?'

'No, he'll have his own bed.'

My words make her scowl return. She looks so cute when she's angry. Her facial expressions say so much. 'Can he sleep with me sometimes, Daddy?'

'I guess so, but you'll have to wait until he's a bit bigger.' She's going to be a great big sister, I can tell.

Christine has prepared dinner for me and Grace, we are on our way there now. I'll stay until Grace is settled before heading to the beach house to shower and check on my father. Jem begged me to stay home tonight and get a good night sleep, but without her beside me I know that's not possible. I feel like a part of me is missing when we're apart. I've felt like that our entire life, but even more so since the accident. I no longer take anything for granted. Every second of our time together is precious.

I don't mind spending the night in a recliner, I'll be able to help her with the night feeds, and be there to settle our son if he gets restless. She needs her rest.

I can't help but smile as I pull out of the carpark, heading towards the exit. Unlike that lost and empty feeling I used to get every time I left the hospital after Jemma's accident, my heart now feels so full it may burst. We've come so far, and that horrible time in our past is a distant memory. I have my wife who loves me, and our two beautiful children ... our pigeon pair. Just like Jem had wished for all those years ago, but she wouldn't remember that. Apart from scattered dreams, or random feelings of familiarity, her memory still hasn't returned.

I recently wrote her a letter about that day, but I haven't given it to her yet. She was too emotional in the weeks leading up to Bailey's birth. Her hormones were out of whack, was her reasoning for the mood swings or sudden outburst of tears. She was the same when she was pregnant with Grace.

I was worried the contents of the letter would upset her more, so I held off giving it to her. I must remember to grab it while I'm at the house. She removed her jewellery, including her memory bracelet, before we left for the hospital. I'll be able to add the charm I bought before I leave.

LETTER TWENTY...

Dearest Jemma,

The eighteenth of January, 2013. It was a Friday and five days had passed since we'd found out you were expecting our first child. You were still suffering from morning sickness, and I was so concerned about you. Sometimes the vomiting would last until early afternoon. Although the doctor assured me it was natural, I hated seeing you sick.

Like your pregnancies with Grace, and Bailey, apple juice or peppermint tea were the only things you could keep down in the mornings. By mid-afternoon you'd be famished, and certainly made up for the food you hadn't eaten earlier that day.

I was outside watering the small garden bed you'd planted along the front of our shack, when you walked down the front stairs and made your way towards me. 'I'm thinking about what to cook for dinner,' you said. You had a mouth full of food, and a half-eaten chocolate bar in your hand. It made me smile.

'I'm easy. I'll have whatever you feel like,' I replied, turning off the hose. I reached for you, pulling you into my arms. 'As long as you're eating, I'm happy.'

Leaning into me, you placed your lips on mine. 'I'm so lucky to have you,' you whispered.

'In my opinion, I'm the lucky one!'

You slid your arms around my waist, resting your head on my chest. 'I can't wait to meet our baby, Brax. I hope it's a boy.'

'A boy?' I asked, drawing back from you. 'I thought you would've wanted a little girl.'

'I do eventually. My ultimate wish is to have a pigeon pair ... a boy and a girl, but it will be nice to have a boy first. Especially if he's like you. He can look after his little sister, just like you have always looked after me.'

I was smiling as I placed a soft kiss on your hair. 'I'll need to have a little talk to my boys and make sure you get your wish.'

'Very funny,' you said, giggling. 'I want our daughter to have someone like you in her life.'

'She will ... She'll have the real deal ... That's even better than an imitation me.' I chuckled when you playfully slapped my chest.

'You know what I mean.'

I did, but the thought of our daughter dating one day made me feel incredibly uneasy. I could finally sympathise with your father, and the struggles he faced when we first started dating.

'Why don't you go inside and get changed, and I'll take you somewhere nice for dinner. We can go to that all-you-can-eat buffet at the club.'

Your eyes widened as soon as I mentioned the all you can eat buffet, you loved going there. It wasn't fancy, but the food was good. You always stuffed yourself with so much food you'd get a stomach ache.

'As appealing as that sounds, we really can't afford to eat out ... especially now that we have a child on the way. I'm worried how we're going to be able to afford the mortgage on this house ... Plus—'

'Shh,' I said, cutting you off and placing my finger against your lips. 'I don't want you worrying about anything. We'll manage, Jem. I promise.'

'Okay.' Although you smiled, I could tell by the slight frown on your forehead that you were going to continue to worry no matter what. I had no qualms about taking on a second, or even a third job if needed. Taking care of you was all that mattered to me. You and the baby were my responsibility. 'Can we just eat dinner here? We have a tonne of stuff in the freezer ... I don't want to share you with anyone.'

'Is that so?' I asked, nipping at your bottom lip.

'Tonight I want you all to myself.'

I liked the sound of that. We were always at our happiest when it was just the two of us. 'Whatever makes you happy, Jem.'

'I feel like pasta.' You stuffed the rest of the chocolate into your mouth before extending your arms out wide. 'A huge big plate ... With that spaghetti sauce Mum makes, and maybe a salad ... Oh, and some garlic bread. Mmm, garlic bread,' you whispered. I laughed when you tilted your head back, practically salivating.

Draping my arm around your shoulder, I guided you inside. 'Let's see what supplies we need to prepare your feast.'

We had everything we needed except for the salad ingredients. Every time your parents visited, your mother would stock up our freezer with meals she had prepared. She's always been great like that.

You set about heating the spaghetti sauce in a pot on the stovetop, while I drove to the store.

After buying what we needed, I headed back towards the carpark. I passed a store that I hadn't noticed before. The baby jumpsuits hanging on a sales rack out the front are what caught my eye. I remember stopping and picking one up. They were so tiny. I was consumed with the need to buy you something. I wanted to be the first. Your mother would've gone on a shopping spree the moment she found out, but sadly she never did. To this day we haven't told any of our family or friends about our loss. It's what you wanted. You've always hated people fussing over you.

I'd only taken a few steps inside the store when my eyes were drawn to the cutest pair of socks. There was a bunch of them sitting in a neat row on the shelf beside the front counter. I picked up the ones with the pink writing first: I love my Mummy was embroidered on them. They looked minuscule sitting in the palm of my hand. In that moment it all became real. It was overwhelming and somewhat daunting to know our baby was going to be that small when it was born. I'd never had anything to do with babies in the past.

My eyes flickered down to the blue pair next. The inscription, I love my Daddy, really seemed to hit home. I'm not ashamed to admit I was so overcome with emotion that a lump rose to the back of my throat. It had only been five days, but the realisation that we were going to become parents was starting to set in.

I had no idea if the baby you were carrying was a boy or a girl, but your words from earlier that day came to the forefront of my mind ... 'I want a pigeon pair ... a boy and a girl.' With that in mind I decided to purchase them both. I actually felt giddy on my drive home. Even now I can still picture the look on your face when I gave them to you ... I remember telling you what a great mum you were going to be, and I wasn't mistaken. I couldn't ask for a more loving or nurturing mother for our children.

The timing may not have been perfect, but in my heart I knew

having a child together would only enhance our love for each other ... If that was even possible. At the time, I didn't think it was possible to love you anymore than I already did. I know better now. My love for you is endless.

Later that night as we laid in bed in each other's arms, everything seemed so perfect. The initial shock of becoming parents had worn off, and reality had well and truly set in. We laid there for hours talking about all our hopes and dreams for our child. I'm pretty sure we had both eventually fallen asleep with smiles on our faces. Neither of us could have predicted how short-lived our happiness would be, and that the very next day all those dreams would be shattered and our world as we knew it would fall apart.

The days that followed were a dark time for both of us, especially for you. The smallest of things would reduce you to tears. Sometimes your sadness was replaced with anger, and you'd lash out or snap at me for no reason. This was a side of you I hadn't seen before, but deep down I understood. I was hurting too, but more so for you.

In time I knew you'd be okay, but for the interim I was at a loss. There was a part of me that worried this would change us, and things would never be the same. I wanted to make all that hurt go away, but there was nothing I could say or do to make it better ... God I hated that. I'd never felt so helpless.

The 22nd of August, 2013. By now, everything had gone back to the way it used to be. Your beautiful smile had returned, and you were laughing again. I can't even tell you how relieved that made me feel. I felt like I could finally breathe again. You hadn't mentioned the baby or the miscarriage in months, and although that made me sad, I knew it was a coping mechanism for you.

So much time had passed, and the day I found you sitting on the side of our bed sobbing your heart out, I didn't even link your tears to the baby. That is, until I noticed you were holding those tiny socks in your hand. Without hesitation I wrapped you in my arms, but my comfort did nothing to ease your heartache. It almost broke me to see you like that, and it brought everything flooding back.

'Talk to me, Jem? Tell what's made you so upset?' I asked.

'Today is my due date,' you replied through your tears. I hadn't even realised, and that knowledge had me consumed with guilt. You

hadn't been yourself all day, and I hated that you'd been going through this alone. 'Today I should've been holding my baby instead of these damn socks, it's so unfair.'

'I'm sorry.' I didn't know what else to say. 'I'm so sorry.'

I held you for what seemed like forever, all the while holding back my own tears. 'Can you get rid of these?' you eventually asked, passing me the socks and wiping your eyes with the back of your hand. 'It hurts too much to look at them.'

You were right, they would've been a constant reminder. I didn't want you to forget our child, I knew neither of us would, but I knew I couldn't bear to see you like this again.

While you were in the shower, I ducked outside. My hand hovered over the bin, but I couldn't bring myself to throw them out. I'm sorry, but I just couldn't. In my heart it felt wrong.

The following day, I went to buy you some flowers, but instead I walked out with a rose bush. I wanted you to have something that would live on forever. I didn't mention that when I gave it to you, but I'm pretty sure you knew why I'd done this. You even planted it in a pot, instead of the garden. I can only assume it was because you knew our existing garden would eventually go, along with our little shack.

I'd chosen white roses. The lady at the nursery had told me white roses not only symbolised remembrance, but also innocence, purity and youthfulness. We still have the rose bush, it's the one growing in the large blue pot on the front veranda. Before the accident you used to cut off the flowers when they were in bloom and place them in a vase beside our bed. Without even realising, you still do this. Out of all the flowers that grow in our garden, these are the ones you always choose. Every time you do this my heart smiles. For me it just proves that your memory is still with you ... it's just tucked away somewhere deep inside.

Despite everything we've been through since that day, we made it. It took a few years to get there, but as that old saying goes, "Good things come to those who wait." You finally got your wish ... Your pigeon pair. Words can't even express what that means to me. Your happiness has, and always will be my priority. I'm blessed that you

chose me to father your children, and to be the person you spend the rest of your life with.

Thank you doesn't quite seem enough for everything you've given me. You and our children are the light in my life, and the love in my heart. I promise to always be there for you, Grace and Bailey. Always!

I love you, Jemma Isabella Rosalie Spencer ... right down to the depths of my soul.

What we had is far too beautiful to be forgotten.

Yours always,

Braxton.

A huge smile graces my face as I pop my head around the privacy curtain in Jemma's hospital room. Our son is lying contently across her ribcage as she feeds him. The look of love I see on her face as she stares down at him makes my heart ache. I stand there quietly for a few minutes just watching. My life couldn't be more perfect.

Her eyes light up when she finally notices me. If I could bottle that look I would. 'How long have you been standing there?' she asks.

'A few minutes,' I reply as I walk towards the bed.

'I was hoping you'd take my advice and sleep at home tonight.'

'Not a chance in hell ... Besides, I told you I wouldn't be able to sleep without you beside me.'

Leaning down, I place a soft kiss on her lips, before gently running the back of my finger down Bailey's sweet face. He looks just like his mother with his dark hair, cute nose and full lips.

'How was Grace when you dropped her off?'

'Missing her brother, but your mother's cupcakes were a good distraction. When I left, she was eating popcorn and watching Frozen with your father.'

'Poor Dad,' she says with a sympathetic smile. 'He hates that movie.'

'Makes two of us,' I chuckle as I sit down on the side of the bed. 'How are you feeling?'

'Great ... tired ... happy,' she answers with a smile. She looks

tired ... tired but beautiful. Motherhood agrees with her, she's glowing.

After burping our son, Jemma goes to rise.

'What do you need? Stay, I'll get it for you.'

'I want to change Bailey before I put him back down.'

'Let me,' I say, taking him from her. I've missed doing these kinds of things now that Grace has grown.

'Thank you.' I smile when she settles back into the pillow. 'I love how hands-on you are. I hear all the mums complain about their husbands at mothers group ... It makes me realise how lucky I am.'

After gently laying Bailey down on the change table, I pull the letter out of my back pocket, passing it to her.

'What's this?' she asks.

'A letter.'

'You wrote me another letter?'

'Yes. You probably don't remember wishing for your pigeon pair all those years ago, so I thought I'd remind you.'

'You're just the sweetest,' she says, wasting no time ripping into the pink envelope. 'I've missed your letters.'

My eyes simultaneously dart between her and Bailey as I watch her read my words. This is the first time I get to witness her reactions first-hand. It was something I often yearned for when I wrote the other nineteen letters.

I see her smiling one minute, and wiping tears from her eyes the next. It makes me wish that I'd waited before giving her this letter. Maybe she's not ready to be reminded.

She's finished reading by the time I'm done. I wrap our son tightly in his blanket before placing him in his crib. He's already fallen asleep.

'Are you okay?' I ask Jemma, as I walk back towards her bed.

'Yes,' she says, scooting over and tapping the space beside her. 'Come lie with me.' She pulls back the blankets as I slip out of my shoes. 'I don't care what the nurses say, I'm not having you sleep in the chair tonight. I need you beside me.'

Pulling her into my arms, she rests the side of her face on my chest. 'I was thinking about our baby this morning ... I think about it often and always wonder what if ...'

'Me too,' I say, placing my lips on her hair.

'Just because we have Grace and Bailey, doesn't mean I don't wish things had worked out differently.'

'I feel the same.'

'I dreamt about those socks you know.'

'You did ... When?'

'Years ago. It was after you gave me the letter about the miscarriage. I always wondered if it was a memory, or just a dream. I even looked for them when I moved back in, but I never found them. What did you do with them?'

'I gave them to Mrs Jacobs, the old lady that used to live next door.'

'That was an odd choice. What was an old lady going to do with baby socks?'

Her reply makes me chuckle. 'She used to knit baby clothes to sell at the church fête. I knew they would go to a good home.'

'I'm glad you didn't throw them away,' she says, snuggling in closer.

We are both silent for a few minutes before I finally speak. 'Get some sleep.'

She closes her eyes for a split second before startling me by quickly sitting up. 'My charm,' she says, turning her body and reaching for the envelope she placed on the table beside her bed. Her face drops when she sees the envelope is empty. 'There's no charm?'

I reach into my pocket and pull out the red velvet pouch. 'I've already attached the charm to your bracelet,' I say.

She extends her arm out in front of her when I remove her memory bracelet from the pouch, strapping it to her wrist. She wastes no time spinning it around until she finds her new charm.

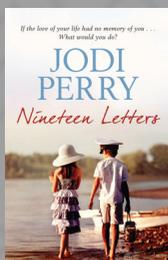
'Oh! Braxton,' she whispers as her eyes fill with tears. 'A tiny pair of baby feet. They're perfect ... you're perfect ... I couldn't have wished for a more perfect life.'

'That's exactly how I feel ... I love you, Mrs Spencer.'

'I love you more, Mr Spencer.'

'Not possible,' I reply.

THE END



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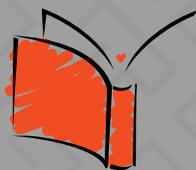
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