

“The Letter” by Alexander Lee-Rekers

A shady bus stop in the afternoon. Sam is sitting listening to music on their headphones. They're holding a letter, which they keep turning over in their hands like it's a Rubik's cube they're trying to solve.

Ash enters with a murderous look in their eyes. Sam smiles at them, but Ash ignores them and throws their schoolbag onto the concrete. They sit as far as they possibly can from Sam on the other end of the bench.

A long, awkward silence.

ASH: No worse way to end the week than double maths, right? Miss Clyde is like some kind of black hole, bending time so it stretches on forever.

Nothing from Sam.

ASH: At least it's the weekend, now.

SAM: Sure.

Ash shifts a little closer to them on the bench.

ASH: You're not talking to me?

SAM: I just did.

ASH: I wonder if there's a way to harness the boring energy that Miss Clyde gives off? Like we could use it to power warp drives or something-

SAM: Guess it doesn't matter to you now, anyway.

ASH: Right.

More silence.

SAM: I can't believe you didn't tell me. I feel so ... stupid. How could I have been so stupid?!

ASH: I wasn't telling anybody.

SAM: I'm not *anybody*. I'm practically your only friend. And now you're leaving me to go to- I don't even know where you're going. Where are you going, Ash? Can you tell me that, at least?

ASH: Mum got a job overseas.

SAM: Overseas?!

ASH: Hong Kong. Maybe you could come and visit?

SAM: I don't want to visit you in Hong Kong. I want to visit you three doors down from my house where you've always lived. Plus, it's practically irresponsible that she'd take you out of school at this age.

ASH: What are you, the principal?

SAM: It's probably stunting your growth. You'll get all weird and withdrawn.

ASH: *(Sarcastically.)* Not with the support of my best friend, I won't.

SAM: You didn't even tell your best friend today was your last day. I had to find out from Kennedy. She got so smug when she realised I didn't know.

ASH: I'm really scared. We weren't even sure we were going to go. But mum got the word over the weekend and it was a "yes" and they need her there, like, ASAP. And suddenly it went from being this weird "maybe" to actual reality. I'm sorry you found out from Kennedy.

SAM: She's the worst. You should leave her behind.

ASH: Mum's already started packing her stuff.

SAM: Shame. *(Pause.)* When do you leave?

ASH: Two weeks.

SAM: Were you ever going to tell me?

Ash hands over the letter.

ASH: It's a letter.

SAM: Obviously.

ASH: I tried to give it to you this morning. It explains that I'm moving away, and that it's really scary. And that I didn't know how to tell my best friend. And I'm sorry.

SAM: You'll be okay.

ASH: I hope so.

SAM: Even without your buddy Sam.

Pause.

ASH: Are you going to read the letter?

SAM: You kinda spoiled it for me, so... Maybe I'll read it later.

The two friends sit together, waiting for the bus to arrive.