

Dear Amelia

Maria Williams

The bus rolls beneath me, causing my pen to run jagged indiscernible lines across the paper that I clutch in my lap. The windows bounce with the movement, making trees jump around me as I ride down the road. I try to curve the ending of an e but the letter is reduced to an inky blotch as a tear falls before I can stop it. Before long, all my sentences are running down the page like rivers after a storm. My dark jeans absorb the liquid without much fuss, so I make no movement and allow the tears to quietly fall.

It's strange how private a bus can be, everyone absorbed in their own journey. I guess I'm no different because for the first time I look up through my watery gaze and notice the people around me. A man is asleep against the glass, cheek vibrating as it shakes. To my left an old woman sits with her friend. I can't hear what they're saying but I imagine them discussing grandchildren and gardening, filling each other in on the gentle journey of their day. I can hear the girl behind me softly counting each stop that we pass. The numbers are comforting and I find myself counting too. The road is solid beneath the bus and the numbers are steady in my mind. That is, until the buzzer goes. The counting stops and the bus slows. Gathering her bags, Snapper card and keys, the girl disembarks with a quick thank you and a determined look.

My attention returns to the soggy mess of ink and tears that is congealing on my lap. Four pages are ripped from the spine before a clean one appears. I can feel the emotions bubbling inside of me but instead of flowing up and out of my pen they rise into my head, building there with gradual pressure until my head begins to throb. Eventually, I struggle out the words 'Dear Amelia' with a shaky hand.

It takes me a second to even comprehend what those words mean and another to comprehend what they mean for *me*. Writing those words means I am finally going to sort through my life and move on. The only thing is that now I'm stuck, again, not sure how to continue. I massage the emotions around in my head, to offer some relief. I hope that they

will brush past a part of my brain that will light a path for me to follow. It remains dark so I turn towards the glass and watch life go by me. A mother pushes her perfect baby down the street as it smiles and coos out at the blue sky framed by its pram. They stop to watch a butterfly flutter out of a tree and I lose them from view as the bus whips past. In the distance I can see a green park peeking happily out from behind a line of trees. Kids kick balls, teenagers skate and a group of runners make their way around the perimeter. They are all wiped away as I turn a sharp corner, replaced by the dilapidated apartment blocks on the outskirts of town.

Slowly, line by line, I etch my life onto the lines of my notebook. Sometimes I can't help but smile but then I feel the prick of tears behind my eyes again. Gradually the pressure in my head is released as I curve my c's and dot my i's. Some emotions get caught in the commas. I have to let them sit for a while before they will dislodge. When they do it is in a flood of words that leaves my hand cramped and sore. The pages fill up with my childhood: laughter and happiness mix with crippling confusion. Then I get to the part I must address most. She appears in every line, choking the laughter and stabbing the happiness, mixing hate and hostility into her cocktail of confusion. I can hear people tagging off for the upcoming stop as I write the next few words. Beep. I. Beep. Forgive. Beep. You.

A horn blares and the brakes screech as the bus comes to a halting stop. We are all flung forward in our seats. My notebook flies down the centre aisle and disappears under a seat. The car that pulled in front of the bus continues to careen down the road and the bus driver curses as we begin to move again. We are already close to the stop and as we pull in, I decide that this is where I will get off.