

Dear Nicolas,

You are probably finishing your second soccer game at the tournament down in San Jose. I just finished reading a friend from high school's book called The Last Letter. The book is the story of Andy's life and what taught him to start to make friends with pain instead of avoid it. There are 40 really good chapters I won't try to paraphrase here.

At the end he challenges his readers to write letters to the people they love most as if this is my last chance to express all you mean to me and what I most appreciate about you. So here goes.

Of course I've been in tears since I read the challenge and you and Welle were the first two loved ones who came to mind as the very hardest people to lose.

I will always remember when we lost our dear mouse Speedy and how we cried together. None of us expected to lose her and she taught me so much about how you guys really know the difference between a video game and real life & death.

I have learned so many things from you Nicolas, and just really enjoy you as a human being. As much as it kicks my butt, I love your persistence in convincing me to do what you want. I also know you use good judgement and ultimately know what you need and how to have your needs met even when I may have to go to bed earlier than you!

I love it when you choose shows or episodes of shows like Family Guy or The Simpsons that you know I'll like or that you haven't seen so we can watch together. I've really enjoyed some of the movies we've watched together like Jumanji and many more. You nailed it when you showed me the one episode of Rick & Morty about the Unity Planet.

I love giving you tickly and massages and feel your soft skin and how your body has grown and changed since you were a wee one.

It has been such a joy to be on the soccer sidelines all these years as you've grown from a little boy into teen. I've also cherished when you and I have had a chance to go to dinner or & iScream hang out a bit just you & me. I wish we did that more often.

I always want you to be honest about how you feel about teachers like Ms. Pearson even if I'll always want you to consider that she is a human being with feelings too. It means a lot that you speak candidly about your life and thoughts around me. Please know I will always stand alongside you and hear you even if I may challenge you to consider other perspectives too.

It meant so much to me when you shared your late night note with me sharing all your frustrations about Ms Pearson. I always enjoy your straightforward spunky writing whether it's just your thoughts for you or an

essay or story assignment for school. I'm also so happy when you organize a group of friends to come spend the night at my house.

I'm sorry when I embarrass you by being too open or inquisitive about topics you really do not want to discuss with your mom, like sex or relationships. I just want you to know I would be a safe, anonymous person to talk to about anything, and I do mean anything, and would keep it to myself unless I felt you were in danger.

I've always admired your sensitivity to animals and other humans.

Thank you for your courage in coming over to say goodbye to our sweet Miciola and coming along when we put her to sleep. It meant so much to be able to cry with you. I'm crying right now. I really miss her almost as much as I miss living with you guys.

I hope this is far from the last letter I get to write you. I hope to be this weird forever and keep writing you letters to let you know how very very very much I love you and love being your mom. I truly do miss not living together every day. I did not leave your dad because I don't love him and you, I simply needed more autonomy to be true to myself. It broke my heart to move out and I really hope you know it was not because of anything you or Welle or even dad did wrong. I simply needed to do it for myself. That's still a really tough one to write.

*I love you with all my heart, Nico boy.*

*May we have many many years to share.*

*Love, Mom*