

Dear Stevey,

I can't wait any longer. I couldn't bring myself to carve tally marks on the wall, but the empty cans and boxes say it's surely been over a year. The food is running out, and my arms are getting so thin it's been hard to even lift open the bunker door. I have to take a chance out there, whether or not you're still alive.

Each day I regret more and more that I sent my only son out to face who knows what pain and suffering. The squeals and grunts I hear outside haunt me at night, and I can't stop imagining the things you've had to fight off. I know the food wouldn't have lasted for the both of us, and you said you wanted to go—you were always a man of action, like your father—but I can't let myself die without trying to find you.

I hope you found a group and went somewhere safe, but if you come back, know that I've gone to your father's cabin in the mountains. It's not all that far. He kept canned food there, too. I doubt many others could find the place. But I'm hoping you'll have already been there. Even if I never see your face again, knowing that you got to the cabin will be enough to hope you've found some kind of life. If you need supplies, some are in the safe. The code is your birthday.

Mom