

Dear Bethany, Madison and Noah

FEB 2003

If you are reading this, then I failed to be fast enough, smart enough or lucky enough. Writing this is very difficult for me so bear with me if I ramble along. I needed ~~to~~ to write this letter because there are some things that I needed to say and that I wanted you to hear. Bethany, you are the love of my life. I'll never forget the first time I saw you. You looked so beautiful. I had so much fun falling in love with you. Our long walks at West Point, our trips to New York City and Niagara Falls. The times we spent in Montana even if we almost froze on the river that day. I loved every second that I spent with you. I know that through the years we had some rough times, but our love and enjoyment of each other were so much stronger. A funny little thought I've always had. You know that all the formals at West Point were nothing but a competition of who had the prettiest date? I'm not going to lie, but I always checked the competition. Every time you were the most strikingly beautiful woman in the room. I know I told you that every time and you brushed it off, but I truly believed it. I think ring weekend was the most beautiful I have ever seen you second only to watching you hold and sing to babies Madison and Noah. I want you to know that my biggest regret during my relationship with you is that I never gave you the wedding you/we both deserved. I have never doubted that someday we would make it happen. I truly wanted to have the

would have our day in the sun. I hope someday you will find someone who loves you as much as I do. I want you to be with someone who will see you as beautiful as I did. Don't ever feel guilty if you fall in love again. You don't deserve to be alone and unhappy the rest of your life. I understand. I believe there is a heaven and I think I have been a good enough man to be there. I'll watch you and I'll watch the kids grow up with a tear in my eye wishing I was there to see with my own eyes. Someday we will all be together again. I don't think words could ever describe how much I love you. I wish that I could hold you just one more time and whisper in your ear how much I love you. I want you to know that I loved my life. You made me very happy. I ~~was~~ became a better person after meeting you - more complete. When you think of me in years to come, I want you to celebrate my life and not mourn my death. Don't think about all that you, Madison and Noah and I missed but think of the good times we had together.

Madison, I'm sorry I broke my promise to you when I said I was coming back. You were the jewel of my life. You made me so happy every time I saw you. You are the sweetest little girl. Please don't ever change. I wanted nothing more in my life than to be with you ~~as~~ as you grew up. I want you to know that I loved you more than I can ever imagine. If you can do any thing for me, you can take school ~~and~~ seriously and do well. With a good education you can become anything you want. Stay away from drugs, they will ruin your life.

Finally stay away from bad men. You deserve too much. I don't think ~~any~~ anyone would ever be good enough for you. I have to tell you that you really broke my heart that day when I left and you said, "don't go, I need my daddy, I don't want my daddy to go." I nearly cried in front of all the army guys. Stay beautiful, stay sweet. You will always be daddy's little girl. I loved every minute of my life that I spent with you. From the first time I held you, to pushing you on the swings, playing steamroller and walking you to school. I always felt that that was our little ~~thing~~^{thing}. I loved holding your hand and walking you to class. You are such a good girl. I am so very proud of you. You made me so happy. I will always be with you.

Noah you are my miracle son. I loved you very much. I regret that we never got the bond together that I so much wanted. I know I was hard on you but only because I saw so much potential. You made me very happy and proud. I admired how tough you were when you had your surgery. That was the first time I realized that you would always be a fighter and never give up on anything. I have the same dying wish for you as Maddie. Take school seriously and do well. Stay away from drugs. Try to live the rest of your life as the best man you can be. I remember holding you after you were born. I was so happy. You loved it when I stroked your head. You now are the man of the house. Take care of mom and your sister. You now have the same burden as your father had, to carry on the Mackinnon legacy. Try hard to keep it alive.

Noah, I loved you very much and I am, proud to have you as a son. You brightened up my life every time we spent time together. I will always be with you.

I want you all to know that I loved my family very much. Every time I was away, all I could think about is all of you. I know I wasn't the best husband or father in the world, but I always want to be remembered as a family man. I don't care to be remembered as a smart guy or an athletic guy or a good soldier. I want people to say "that Mike really did love his family." I want you to know that my last thoughts in my life were of you. All of you need to get on with your life and do the things that make you happy. It's o.k. to be sad that I'm gone but be happy for me that I got to spend time with a loving wife, a beautiful daughter and an exceptional son. I got to see both your births, I got to see first steps. I got to watch you grow into perfect children. I am very honored to have the three of you as my family. My greatest regret in this life is that I can't watch you grow up. I will be with you all for ever. I consider myself the luckiest man to ever have lived. I couldn't have asked for a better soulmate or better children. I don't think in any letter I could ever say all that needs to be said, so I will end it here. I am proud, I am happy, I have been filled with so much love. I will always be there in your hearts.

Love always and Forever,

Michael - Daddy