

I am writing this like a letter, because speaking feels heavier than silence lately. You offer love so gently, and my hands shake unsure where to place it safely. I learned love as survival, loud and sharp, something earned through endurance and pain. So when you arrive softly, patient and kind, my instincts keep bracing again.

Your love is healthy, steady, unfamiliar, asking nothing, not hurting me to stay. Mine was fire and chaos, proof through wounds, affection measured by how much broke away. So I flinch when you show up consistently, because nothing in me learned consistency. I confuse peace with boredom, kindness with traps, safety with something I will lose eventually.

This is not rejection of you, it is a confession of how I was taught. Love arrived conditional, withdrawing warmth whenever I failed tests I never sought before. You love without bruising, without proving points, quietly without keeping score or debt owed. And that scares me more than anger, because I do not know repayment roads.

I want to let you in, but my body still speaks the language of defense. It mistakes your patience for an ending, assumes love must always be temporary tense. So this letter is me standing honest, saying I am learning what love can be. If I hesitate, please know it is fear grieving, not my heart doubting thee.

I grew up in the shadow of the Test, a gauntlet I was never meant to pass. I had to be the perfect mirror, the quiet child, the one who never broke the glass. I was measured by my utility, by how much of my own light I could suppress, Learning that love was a prize given only to those who could handle the stress. I had to anticipate the mood, read the air, and soften every blow. I had to be the anchor for people who didn't even want to let me go.

I was tested on my silence, tested on my smile, tested on my ability to bleed. I was taught that my value was only found in satisfying someone else's need. If I was too loud, the warmth was pulled back like a blanket in the cold. If I was too honest, the story was rewritten and I was the one who was sold. I lived in a world where the goalposts moved every time I got close to the line, Where "I love you" was a weapon used to keep my spirit from being mine.

But God, I adore you. It is the most terrifying thing I have ever had to admit. I adore the way you look at me and do not look away when I am falling to bits. I adore the quiet way you exist, the way you carry your light without burning my skin. It makes me want to rip out the stitches of every cage I've ever lived within. I want to let you in. I want to collapse into the safety of a chest that doesn't heave with rage. I want to believe that the story is changing, that I am finally turning the page.

I am suspicious of your hands because they aren't clenched into fists. I am looking for the fine print, the hidden terms, the "I told you so" lists. I am memorizing the way you breathe when

you're asleep, terrified of the cost. I adore you with a desperation that makes every other love feel like a ghost. I want to give you a version of me that isn't always bracing for a blow. I want to be the garden you deserve, instead of the dirt where nothing can grow.

I am mourning the version of me that thought she had to be perfect to be kept. I am mourning the nights I didn't reach out, the secrets I held while I slept. You are the first place I've ever been where I wasn't expected to pay rent in pain. You are the first time I've ever seen the sun without expecting the rain. And it makes me weep, the sheer kindness of it, the way you don't ask for a thing. It makes me want to give you the world, and every song I've ever wanted to sing.

I am a house built during a riot, boarded up and braced for a world that is cruel. I have been used as a shield, used as a target, used as a desperate tool. And here you are, bringing flowers to a war zone, refusing to leave the ruins. You see the jagged edges and the salt, and you don't ask me to be "human." You just stay. You just breathe. You just exist in the space where I am small. And it makes me want to scream because I don't know how to survive without the wall.

I confuse your mercy with a countdown, your patience with a fuse that hasn't lit. I am terrified that the "real me" is just a puzzle where none of the pieces quite fit. I am a dog that was kicked for so long it doesn't know what a head-scratch means. I am trying to rewire a brain that was programmed for the most violent of scenes. But I adore you. I adore the way you call my name like it's a song and not a threat. I adore you with a heart that hasn't learned how to be fully open yet.

If I push you away, if I scream at the silence, if I beg you to just be cruel, It's because I'm a drowning person who doesn't understand the rules of the pool. I adore you. I adore you. I adore you. Please let that be the anchor that holds. Even when I am shivering, even when my heart feels heavy and cold. I am fighting a war with my own ghost just to stand here and hold your hand. I am learning to walk on solid ground when I've only ever known sinking sand.

Wait for me. I am coming out of the dark. I am choosing you every single day. I am just learning that love is allowed to be soft, and that you are actually going to stay. I am unlearning the scars. I am learning the soft. I am learning to finally be still. I am letting you in, brick by jagged brick, through the sheer force of my will. Don't mistake the distance for a lack of heat; I am burning with the need to stay. I am just a girl who was lost in the dark, finally finding her way. I adore you. Not because you save me, but because you let me save myself. And for the first time in my life, I'm not putting my heart back on the shelf.