

Title: The Last Letter

The porch creaked under the weight of time and memory. Henry settled into his old wooden chair, its arms polished smooth by decades of use. The late afternoon sun poured over the fields like honey, casting long shadows from the rose bushes that bordered the porch. They were in full bloom—lush, fragrant, and defiantly alive.

He held a fountain pen in his hand, a gift from another lifetime. The paper before him was yellowed, edges curled slightly as if it too had aged with him. He hadn't written a letter in years, but today felt different. Today felt necessary.

He uncapped the pen and paused, letting his thoughts catch up to his intentions.

"Dear Lily," he wrote, the ink flowing gently.



It had been fifteen years since she passed. Time was supposed to make grief gentler, more manageable—but it never did. It simply taught you how to carry it, how to smile while your heart ached, how to remember without breaking.

"I watered the roses today. They're still your favorite—crimson, with that soft curl at the edges. You always said they reminded you of little velvet dresses."

Henry smiled faintly as he wrote. His hand trembled slightly, but the words still came.

"You'd be proud of the garden. I didn't give up on it, even though I wanted to, that first year. I talk to the plants now, just like you used to. It felt silly at first, but now it feels like breathing. Like maybe you're still listening."

He looked up at the horizon, where the sun was beginning to dip. The warmth on his face reminded him of her touch, of lazy afternoons and shared silences.

"I went into town yesterday. That diner we loved is still there. The one where we got stuck during that summer storm and had cherry pie for dinner. They still serve it, you know. It's not as good as I remember, but maybe that's because nothing tastes the same without you sitting across from me, stealing the last bite."

He chuckled, then paused. The sound echoed too loudly in the quiet.

"I see you sometimes, Lily. In dreams, in reflections. Once, I could've sworn I heard your voice when I was half-asleep. You said 'Don't forget to smile.' I tried."

He folded his hands around the pen, letting silence sit with him. The garden swayed gently in the wind. A rose petal floated down, coming to rest on the porch.

"Do you remember that song we danced to at our wedding? I played it yesterday. I danced with your photo. I must've looked ridiculous, an old man waltzing alone. But I could almost feel your hand in mine."

Henry glanced at the envelope resting beside him. On it, in careful script, he had already written her name: *Lily*.

No address. No return stamp. But it would find its place.

"Everyone told me to move on. That grief was just another phase of life. But you weren't a phase. You were the whole story. I never remarried, though kind people tried to set me up. I couldn't. You see, I never stopped loving you."

He drew in a shaky breath.

"I wonder, wherever you are, do you miss me too? Do you hear me talking to you at night? I hope so. I hope love is strong enough to cross that distance."

The light began to fade. Fireflies started to blink between the rose bushes. Henry folded the letter carefully, his hands lingering on the creases.

"I'm tired, love. Not just from age, but from waiting. I'll be with you soon. And maybe, wherever you are, there's a porch and a garden, and we can sit side by side again."

He stood slowly, his joints protesting, and walked to the rose bush they planted the year they bought the house. Kneeling gently, he dug a small hole at its base. With quiet reverence, he placed the letter inside, covered it with earth, and patted it down.

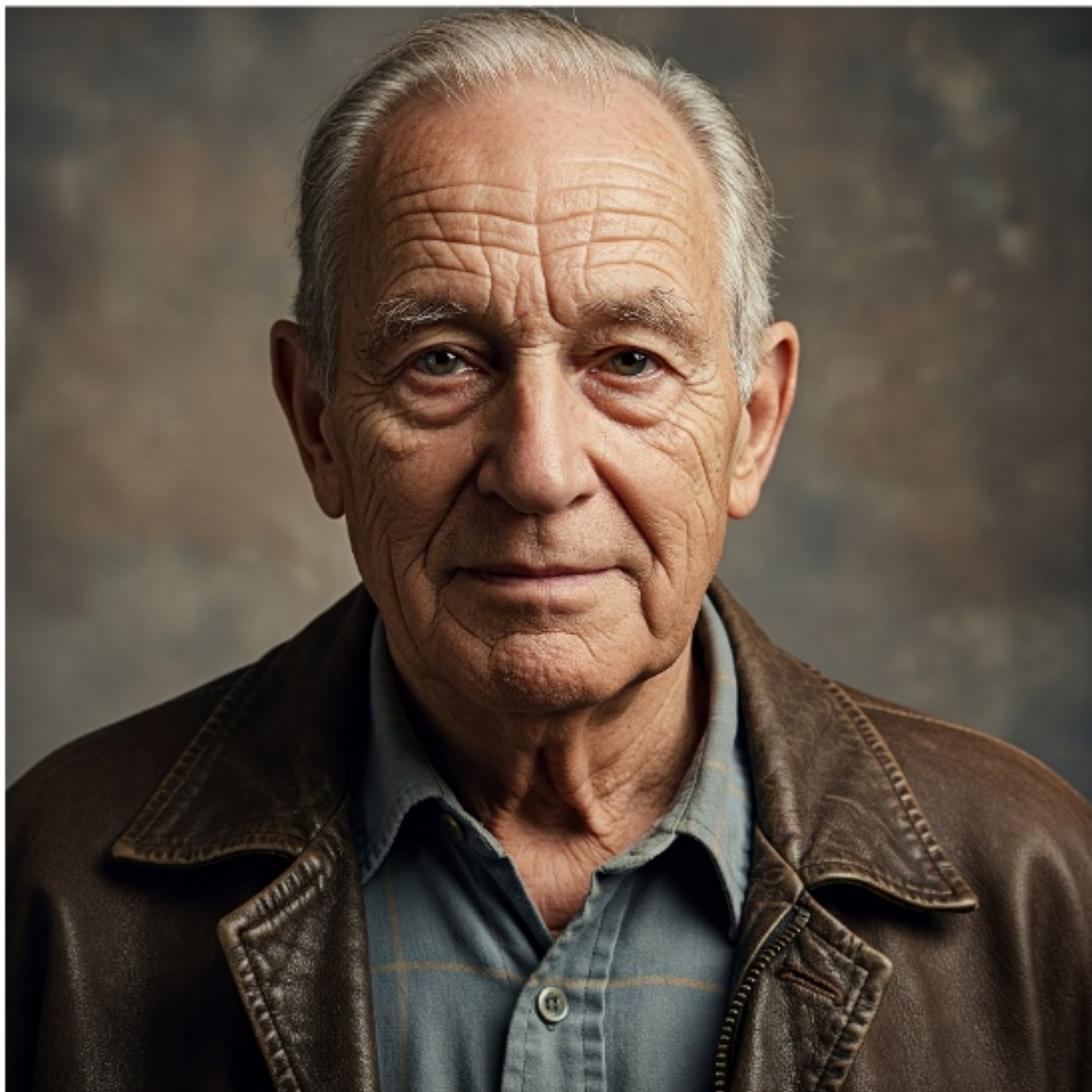
Then he sat again on the porch, hands resting in his lap.

The stars began to emerge, one by one, and the wind whispered through the trees.

For the first time in a long while, Henry felt peace.

And somewhere, perhaps just beyond what the eye could see, a woman named Lily smiled, folded a letter in her hands, and whispered back,

"See you soon."



He stood slowly, his joints protesting, and walked to the rose bush they planted the year they bought the house. Kneeling gently, he dug a small hole at its base. With quiet reverence, he placed the letter inside, covered it with earth, and patted it down.

Then he sat again on the porch, hands resting in his lap.

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The Last Letter

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