



# I don't *love* you anymore

moving on and  
living your best life

**NATIONAL  
BESTSELLER**

**RITHVIK SINGH**

Updated and Revised Edition



RITHVIK SINGH

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# I Don't Love You Anymore

*Moving On And Living Your Best Life*



PENGUIN BOOKS

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## **I DON'T LOVE YOU ANYMORE**

Rithvik Singh is one of India's most beloved poets. With a degree in English literature from Hansraj College, University of Delhi, and an unceasing love of writing, he writes to give hope to those looking for it. With over 5,00,000 followers on Instagram (@wordsofrithvik), his words never fail to feel like home to his readers. He lives with his family in Udaipur, but his heart and soul are married to Delhi.

If you enjoy reading this book, please write to Rithvik at @wordsofrithvik on Instagram. He'd love to hear from you!

ALSO BY THE SAME AUTHOR

*Warmth*

For my mother,

My heart is a flower at your feet.

*Thank you for being the only person who always loves me, even at my  
worst.*

This book will make you feel too many things, all at once.

Just like life does sometimes.

Dear Reader, I love you. And I hope you love yourself enough to leave anyone who breaks your heart. Your heart was meant to be worshipped, not turned into a war zone.

I hope this book feels like a warm hug to you. I wrote this book for the ones who feel everything too deeply. *You're right. I wrote this book for you.*



If you ever knew someone who loved you enough to be terrified of losing you, I hope you know how rare it is to find someone like that. Someone who would leave flowers on your dining table, kisses on your forehead and the scent of love in your heart. Someone who would gently hold the pieces of your heart on days when life gets too hard. If you ever knew someone who loved you the way the sky loves its stars, I hope you didn't end up breaking their heart. *And if you did, I hope life breaks your heart too.*

There are forests of feelings inside you. May you find someone who knows how to water your soul. Someone who not only notices your absence but also hates it. Someone who never lets you question if there's something fundamentally wrong with you—if you deserve to be loved. Someone who loves you as if that's what they were made for—loving you with all their heart. Someone who makes you fall in love with the days you didn't even think you'd be alive to see. *Someone who never lets you give up on yourself by giving you all the love you deserve.*

There's a dying patient who has fallen in love with life. An orphan who thinks his parents are still alive. A soldier's wife waiting for a letter from her husband who died. A wilted flower waiting for spring to arrive. We're all so different yet so alike—wanting things we cannot get and praying to a God who refuses to listen.

Your heart is a crime scene. There are old letters stacked on the shelves. The place reeks of memories. There's blood in every corner, but there's also love. So much love.

More often than not, the person you wouldn't mind burning cities for is the same person who wouldn't mind leaving you in the fire. You wouldn't mind taking your life for someone who wouldn't stop taking you for granted.

My heart is a monastery in the land of atheists. Prayers don't make sense to them, but all my prayers aren't for them anyway. *They've always been for you, only you.*

It takes years to let go, they say, but how many years?

How many years before I finally make coffee in the morning and don't add extra sugar to it because you liked it that way? When will I go to the mall and not spend an hour at the bookstore because you loved books more than you loved me? When will I stop taking pictures of the sky as it changes colour and saving them to a folder I wish I could send you? When will I start loving roses more than sunflowers? When will I stop letting my life be yours, knowing you're not mine anymore? *It's not the same for everyone, you see. It took you a few seconds to let go, but it's taking me a lifetime.*

The flowers you gave me are kept between the pages of books I've loved all my life. I pretend not to love you anymore but catch myself opening those books every once in a while.



They treat you like a room they visit on random days.  
You don't have to lose yourself for someone  
whose love comes in waves.

Some people are like songs stuck in your head. You miss them like you hum that song—unknowingly but constantly. You don't remember the lyrics, and you don't know them well either. *All you know is that you cannot get them out of your head.*

Without me,  
you'll never run out  
of mouths to kiss,  
but you'll always  
*run out of love.*  
Always.

Honeybees would  
be jealous,  
you've got a voice  
so sweet.

There are flowers  
in our irises  
that bloom  
every time  
we meet.

May your grief leave you with empathy—enough to make kindness your home, come what may.

You're not the kind of flower  
that can be plucked  
and put in someone's hair.

You're the kind of flower  
people find too pretty to pluck.

*The kind of flower that deserves  
to keep blooming.*

We're in a pastry shop, and your voice is the sweetest thing here. There are mulberry trees outside, but I cannot shift focus from your eyes. Love is overflowing inside you; I see it shining through your eyes.

Sometimes, loving someone feels like an autumn that refuses to leave.  
That's when you know it's time to let go.



You're a letter of hope in a concentration camp. A solitary flower in a barren land. There are poems stitched into your soul. Flowers blush when you touch them, I've been told. You're everything magic in a world too ordinary. The kind of person people write novels about.

I will always be a stranger to what goes on in your heart.  
I'll always keep wondering if there's room for me in it.

It's no less than magic, you see,  
what your presence does to me.

Things are hard with people who don't love you hard. People whose love isn't the ocean but its waves. The ones who always leave you confused. They don't tell you that they love you, but they also don't accept that they don't. They hold your hand but refuse to hold your heart. They lend you space in their heart, but they don't let you stay in it.

There are people who will come back to you only after the world has pushed them away, and there'll be someone waiting with flowers at your doorstep despite hundreds of voices around them begging them to stay. Choose wisely.

You're at the airport, hugging them goodbye. You knew it would hurt, but it hurt a lot less when you had imagined it. Each step is taking them away from you. You've left your fragrance in the scarf they're wearing. In their hands, which you wouldn't be holding for a long, long time. Behind their ear, where you blew them kisses. In that blue shirt they wore way too often because you loved it. There's so much of you they're taking away with them, but you cannot go with them. You want them to stay, but you feel like a bird with feet wrapped in wires. There's more sadness in you than the morning paper. *You love them too much to not let them grow.*

*May your healing turn you into a river after rain.*

I run out of words when you're around—it's true.  
I write for a living, but I live for you.



I remember everything about you, but nothing that I loved you for. I remember you laughing after seeing me in pain, hanging up calls and smashing the door in my face. Throwing hot tea at me and watching me sit in a corner, drenched in anxiety. I remember you sleeping in my arms and talking about someone else. Taking me to the movies and using a dating app while holding my hand. Trust me, I have a hard time letting go of people, even after they show me they don't want me anymore, but my heart remembers everything you did to me. All because I loved you. All because I believed, for once, that someone wouldn't choose to break my heart. But it's been long since I've been sad, months since I've cried on the bathroom floor. Trust me, I'm glad *I don't love you anymore*.

There's a little sadness in your heart when you hang up the phone after talking to them for hours. You hug them for a few more minutes at the metro station before saying goodbye. You spend ten days with them but cannot stop wishing for an eleventh. You're in love with them—the way they move their eyebrows mid-conversations, the way their crooked teeth make the most beautiful smile, the way they laugh for hours about the silliest jokes, and the way their eyes widen and shine when they see your face. Never let them go, okay?

There are poems I've written  
about being in love,  
and poems I've written  
about being in pain,  
it's strange how  
they all read  
*exactly the same.*

Love for you has always been a person,  
it's tragic how  
that person has never been you.

I'll watch nine episodes of a show in one day, but keep postponing the last one. When things change. When fate changes. I avoid watching it. I try not to make it to the end. I bury my curiosity and start another show. I go out and meet a friend. I do everything I can to not let the show end. But I know I've got to face the ending, no matter how much it terrifies me, or how far I try to run away from it. I know the show has already ended. I know the ending won't change. *This is not about the shows.*

I'm not the kind of person who wishes good for people who've wronged me.

My mother spoke to you with flowers in her mouth, but your words were thorns that pierced her heart. You don't deserve to be happy.

I held you on days when even the sun refused to bring you light, but you abused my kindness and left me alone that night. I hate what you did to my heart.

When I needed you the most, you left me alone with my fears and ghosts. I'm sorry, but I'm not angelic enough to mind seeing you in pain. This is what you deserve. This is all you've gained.

## Love

It's in having tea at midnight with someone who is used to having it at night, only to give them company.

In forgetting the distance between cities and crossing it with a smile on your face—only to put a smile on the face of the person you love.

Seeing a flower shop and immediately getting a few for someone.

Sitting on video calls at night and not talking to each other because you're both tired, but never being too tired to not make some time for each other.

Holding hands in busy streets and holding them tight at the end of a busy week.

It's in refusing to let distance change your feelings. In ensuring that love never leaves.

You're at a hill station, and there's too much fog to see the sun, but that doesn't make the place any less beautiful. Just because your path is unclear doesn't mean light doesn't exist. It doesn't mean the journey isn't beautiful or worth it.



Your heart becomes the heaviest thing to carry when it's overflowing with love for someone who always leaves you feeling unworthy of love.

Your eyes tell me what he's doing to your heart,  
there were sunflowers in them the last time I saw you,  
and now, they're all wilting apart.

Someone who has been loved by grief all his life will, of course, fall in love with the person who makes him smile— because you can grow roses in the backyards of mansions full of empty people with ease, but it's special when the flood breaks the last flower in a garden and someone picks it up, puts it in a vase filled with water, and looks at it with affection. The flower doesn't survive, but at least it feels loved again.

You ask me if I've ever been loved before, and I tell you I've loved and I've been left—nobody has ever stayed long enough to ask me this question.

I detest your presence. I'm too scared of what your absence might do to me.

I'll always be the first one to open my arms for you,  
and the last one you'll choose to hug.

I've been clumsier than ever  
since the day we met.  
I'm carefree now—  
knowing I've found someone  
who is careful with my heart.

And when you're tired,  
don't think twice before falling into my arms.  
*I'm tired too,*  
*but I'll never run out of love for you.*



You would *forget* to add hearts to *good morning* messages. Disappear for hours without a reason. Suddenly be mad at me, mid-conversation. Go to sleep knowing I'm anxious. I'd sit the next day in the car with you, quietly. You wouldn't ask me what happened, and I would be too scared to tell. I had told you I overthink a lot, and you ensured I never stopped.

Your soul will turn into a shooting star;  
every inch of your being will shine for them.

I've been watering a rose plant for months now, and today, I finally saw a rose in it. But for you, I'd pluck my favourite flower, break all its petals and arrange them to write your name. For you, I don't mind breaking things—be it a flower, be it my heart.

My past selves  
are buried inside me.  
They cry to resurrect  
when I try to give  
love another chance.

You're so used to apologizing to people and begging them to stay that when someone apologizes to you for hurting your feelings, you've no idea what to say. Tragic how your feelings have never mattered to anyone before and how people have always found it easier to walk away.

Your absence has created  
cemeteries in my soul,  
there's so much of me  
that doesn't exist anymore.

Our love is a sinking ship in the middle of the ocean.  
If we must stop loving each other, life must stop loving us too.

There's a perfume bottle in my room. Mom says it smells like autumn, but I know it smells like you. There are nights when I wish you could move your fingers through my hair and tell me about your day. I'd wake up smelling just like you. But I know all your days are bright without me. I know you don't hold onto me in fragrances, among other things, the way I do.



Your colours cover all the corners of my heart. There are shades of you in the way I talk. There's so much of you in the morning sky. How do you expect me to forget you when you are synonymous with beauty for me? When everything beautiful is everything you are. When everything gorgeous will always remain a little less gorgeous than you. The truth is, you're everywhere around me and within me—even though you're not in love with me anymore.

Your absence did so much to me, but it couldn't undo how I feel about you. I want to send you the poems that rip my heart apart and write you poems for when your heart gets too heavy. Turn your soul into a sunflower field and ensure you never run out of light. Love you on the days when life stops making sense and also on the days when it does. Hold you closer than the moon holds its shine, the ocean holds its depths and temples hold statues of the divine.

There are people who love you, but not in the way you love them. Their love is platonic. And when you fall in love with such people, they push you away instead of asking you to stay. Not because they don't care, but because they care too much. Because they know how much your heart would break if you didn't walk away. Because they know your feelings aren't butterflies that'll die in a few weeks. Thank them for teaching you how to save someone by not being there to save them. By letting go of them, even if it breaks their heart—to save them from further damage while always wishing them well, but from a distance. Trust me, staying in touch with someone you've unrequited feelings for is the worst thing you can do to your heart.

Nothing breaks hearts quite like the silence of loved ones—a quiet declaration that they’re tired of trying to love you for who you are.

And when they refuse to choose you, choose distance. Because staying won't make a difference. I know those feelings are precious, but, my love, so is your heart. So is your heart.

Loving someone shouldn't feel like a tug of war where you're always fighting for their attention. It shouldn't feel like a race you've to win, at the end of which lies the trophy of affection. It shouldn't feel like a sale at a store where there are too many people wanting the same person you want. It shouldn't have to feel like a fight or war. You shouldn't have to constantly struggle to make space for yourself in their heart. If there are too many people they'd rather be with than you, they don't deserve to be with you. *Love is not a trophy you've to fight for but a gift someone wants to give you every day without you having to ask them for it.*

You have the spirit of a bird. Falling doesn't stop you from flying. And that's what I love the most about you—you *always keep trying*.

You can never teach your heart to be okay with saying goodbye. Losing them will make you cry—sometimes for weeks at a stretch. It will make you lose a little faith in love and people. But losing them shouldn't make you give up on the magic of healing. Of letting hope re-enter your heart. Of wanting to be okay again. Of learning to live without them and smiling just the way you used to, with them and before them. *They'll always matter to you, but you need to choose yourself for yourself, and for the people you still matter to.*



When someone is breaking someone's heart, do they forget that the other person loves them? Do they not think about what they're doing to the person's heart? Does sleep not elude them, knowing someone isn't okay because of them? Are they too used to breaking people to care about how they're going to deal with it? *Do they not have a heart?*

You're staying with them because you're scared of being heartbroken, but tell me, aren't they already breaking your heart every day?

Writers think they're too powerful until they realize they can write poems all they want, but that person still won't feel the same way about them. Expressing your feelings is a superpower, you see, but sometimes your feelings can leave you feeling powerless too.

Your life is a book of poems written in advance. You don't get to edit, only live. And some poems are like that—they tear your heart apart—but there are enough poems in the book to ensure you're okay at the end.

I found so much of me  
after you left,  
the shrinking of me  
was the cost of staying with you.

Trust me,  
I've been feeling my feelings so freely  
since the day I stopped having  
feelings for you.

My mother's smile is so beautiful, my father must hate that about her for he never let her smile for too long.

She buried her dreams  
to make space for us to belong I wonder how much pain lives within her I  
wonder how she manages to stay this strong.

*My heart is made of art.* The poems may not make sense to you, but they'll always make you feel something. Always.



If you ever miss me, know that I've loved you in sentences and silences, prose and poetry, thunderstorms and the peace that eventually comes. I've loved you more than I've loved the ones who've loved nobody more than me. I've loved you on days when my heart was blooming and also on days when it was breaking. I've loved you with the kind of sincerity that can make anyone wonder what they have done to deserve a love like that. It was you who couldn't value it, any of it. And now, I can't value you anymore.

There was a time when you were the rain to my flowers. You learned the language of my soul, but today, we don't care about each other anymore. Today, you're like rain to my desert. We seldom meet. The flowers in my chest don't bloom anymore.

Your sadness stopped the sunshine from entering your heart, so I walked in instead.

—*I hope you let me stay.*

Some people enter your life  
to teach you that  
not everyone who  
extends a helping hand  
has their heart in the right place.

I went to a store, and a signboard there said,  
'If you break something, consider it yours.'

Things have a way of belonging to you, even after you break them. *The way  
I still belong to you, despite everything.*

Love is in paying attention to the things that add sparkle to their eyes and turn their cheeks flamingo pink. Love is in ensuring you do those things more often.

Just because the darkness has stayed a little longer than you thought doesn't mean it's in love with you. You were made by the sun to add light to the world, not to surrender to the darkness and call it your home.

You sleep with a book by your side and not a laptop. You water flowers instead of plucking them. You write poems in your journal instead of forwarding memes. You leave notes on the dining table instead of texting me *good morning*. You hold me close instead of checking your phone. You never finish a show alone. *You still wonder why I am in love with you, when I know the stars would divorce the sky to marry you.*



You deserve to be loved the way the sun loves the earth— someone who shows up every day and brightens your day without you having to ask for it.

Someone who makes you believe that despite the storms and despite the rain  
they'll always come back to you, *they'll always stay*.

You've spent so much time hiding your heart and running away from yourself that whenever someone holds you gently, you cry.

You said you loved me,  
but you did nothing  
to make me stay.

I told you what  
others did to my heart,  
and you left me feeling  
exactly the same way.

It's tragic, isn't it? When someone new enters your life, you don't appreciate how much they love you, as much as you wonder if someday, just like everyone else, they'll stop loving you too.

It hurts me to think that it didn't hurt you when I left. That it, in fact, made you feel better. That my presence in people's lives is a weight on their shoulders, and no amount of love from my end can ever change that.

I'm not the person you left behind, the one whose heart carried nothing but love for you, where there was no space for anyone new.

Because what they say is true, you can love someone with your whole heart and still leave them behind, once you finally realize, ever since you gave them your heart,  
you've not been all right.

My heart was the snow you buried your footprints in.  
You're always with me even when you aren't.

My favourite colour will always be  
that of the sky before storms,  
that of my life before you.



Letting go is hard when there's so much love inside you, dying to belong to them.

The way a tear drops from both our eyes when it's time to say goodbye shows how the only thing keeping us away from pain is each other.

*When the world doesn't want to love you, I hope you don't stand with the world.*

There are jasmine flowers in your garden that bloom even on days when you're not around. Even when there's nobody present to appreciate them. Your mother wears her favourite sarees, even though your father never tells her she looks pretty.

The world can refuse to love you, but may you never stop being the first person who makes you smile.

I'm glad I didn't end up with you,  
I can't imagine my life without this person,  
who has made all my dreams come true.

When you enter a small café and everything there smells like history. A past too deeply stitched to be separated from its existence. There are tiny postcards kept on tables and old clocks hanging on the walls. I wonder how many lovers have entered this place before, holding hands, madly in love with each other. You see, some places are like that—you can't help but write poems about them—*they just refuse to leave your heart.*

When we're together,  
things can be out of place,  
but our hearts are always home.

Loving me is like loving heartbreaks because that's what I'm made of. I carry my heart on my sleeves, and my soul dies to run in your direction, but I'm too scared of what loving you might do to me. *You see, my heart protests against love, but also dies for it.*

With you, I was drowning  
and catching for breath  
as you laughed at me—  
always closer to death than life.

*Without you, I'm the entire ocean,  
brimming with endless life.*



I've bettered the art of leaving people, but I'm yet to learn how to take my heart with me.

You serve your heart to them on a platter once again, hoping they've changed, but the only thing that changes is the way they choose to crush your heart. The method changes, but the pain remains.

*'It's going to rain tomorrow,'* my mom says, and it definitely rains the next day. Ma is good at predicting who is going to break my heart too. But I am always too in love to listen.

Loving the wrong person  
can feel like a storm to some,  
and when they cannot escape it,  
sometimes, they end up  
spending their entire lives  
hopelessly waiting for the sun.

Let your love for yourself be the tapestry that decorates your heart.

You know you don't want them in your life, but you still can't help but reach out to them. You send them that text, you call them on random days and you miss them anyway. You know, even if they came and put all the love in the world at your feet, you still wouldn't want to be with them. *They've hurt you enough to make you stop wanting them, but you just need enough distance to make you stop loving them too.*

My life with you was a half-sunlit room. Your love always brought me  
darkness in an equal measure as light. And the pain never fully left, so I did.

In love, we must turn into flowers.  
Withering isn't a part of love,  
only blooming is.



I would sew a whole new sky if this one refused to let us fly together. I'd do anything to be with you.

I'd sit down one day and not use a semicolon to talk about us. I'd use a full stop. I'd accept that there's nothing more left to our story.

Let me be the petals that adorn your soul,  
and don't ask me to leave,  
the world finds us beautiful together  
and I'm terrified of being alone.

I'm not ready, but it's time,  
to leave you where you are,  
and love myself as I am.

I've lost countless summers  
trying to be the sun  
to your soul,  
but you've made me feel  
too terribly lonely  
to ever regret leaving you alone.

The happiest moments of my life were with you sleeping in my arms—eyes closed and hands wrapped around my waist. This is what my arms were made for, you see, holding you close to me and never letting you go.

When you enter a bookstore and unexpectedly find that one book you've been looking for forever—that smile that covers your face on seeing it—if the same smile doesn't cover their face whenever they look into your eyes, it's not worth it.

It's not easy to say goodbye to someone who has stayed with you while you said your hardest goodbyes. When love breaks your heart, you go to your best friend, but when your best friend breaks your heart, you're left with nowhere to go.

Seeing you with someone else still suffocates my heart. I want you to feel loved, but I don't have the courage to see your hands holding someone else's when my fingers are dying to intertwine with yours. If I were a flower, you could see my petals fall apart one at a time, seeing you look into his eyes. You cannot see my heart break, but that doesn't mean I'm all right.



It's like you've swallowed mountains of pain and they're now a part of you.  
Why do your eyes have so much pain in them? Tell me, what do I do to take  
it all away?

I've grown because of people I've grown apart from.

I still love with my whole heart, but I no longer let loving someone leave me feeling lifeless.

At the end of the day, the stars in the sky  
and the stars in my soul will continue to shine, with or without someone.

If you'd let me, I'd love you more than all the fictional characters you're so deeply in love with. Pluck all the flowers in the world and turn them into an endless carpet for you to walk on. Cage stars into boxes, gift-wrap them and send them to you. Love you in oceans and always fathom your depths. If you'd lend me a little space in your heart, trust me, I'd make space for us in every literature textbook. *There are poets dying to write about a love like ours; let's make their wishes come true?*

*I'm incredibly good at goodbyes, I told you.*

To convince myself that it won't hurt when you leave.

To convince you that I'm not too madly in love with you to let you go.

The person you're running towards has run out of love for you. You can run all you want, but that version of them doesn't exist anymore. And I know it hurts, but it's time for you to stop loving them too.

To find someone who isn't afraid of your storms.

To find someone who was always meant to be your sun.

Moving on isn't about learning to love someone else. It's about going about your day without thinking if that person is thinking about you.

When feelings are flooding inside you,  
remember that floods consume and break things.  
*Don't let your heart be one of them.*



You're not the light that guides people back home. You deserve to be the person who is someone's home. Not a glimmer of hope to take them out of the dark, but a permanent place brimming with warmth for both of you to stay.

Spending even a day without you terrifies me. As if my life is a game of Jenga and you are the only wooden block keeping it from falling apart. I'm learning to accept that falling is a part of my journey, but you're definitely not my destination. And I'll let go of you, even if that means having to start from scratch all over again.

*Someone can have the biggest heart but still refuse to make even a little space for you in it.* They can be capable of loving someone enough to turn them into a Pablo Neruda poem, but not feel anything for you at all. You can love them enough to decorate your heart with everything they love, paint every inch of your soul with their favourite colours, but that won't change how they feel about you. Sometimes, people don't want your love even when you believe there's nobody capable of loving them as intensely as you do. The truth is, there are some feelings you'll always feel alone, and one day, you'll stop trying to make them feel the same way as you do and give your love to someone else—someone who knows how to value your heart.

Remember that one break-up text you didn't send for the longest time because you cared about that person more than yourself?

They were taking you for granted, but you didn't want to break their heart. You kept saving them, at your expense, until one day you decided to hit 'send' and let it go—only for them to say that it was you who never cared about them.

*The people you love are often the ones who end up making you feel horrible about yourself.*

You were in fifth grade when that relative told you your skin tone isn't ideal; you're not smart like your sister and don't have much to offer. You were in seventh grade, and by that time, the message had been repeated so many times that you started believing it. That friend who 'jokingly' told you that you cannot get dates and kept talking about how she, on the contrary, could get anybody she wants. You were at a wedding, and your father told you how that outfit looked funny on you.

Nobody talks about how difficult it is to love yourself when the people around you constantly make you feel unworthy. You may be the kindest person in the world, but that won't ensure the world is kind to you too. Self-love doesn't come easily to most people, and in most cases, the person has nothing to do with it—it's the people around them who are responsible for the same.

Funny how we love to hate the people who failed to love us back.

What good is this heart if it cannot be with the person it beats for?

You lose friends and you don't even notice it until you see an old photograph of you and them, and realize that they're not in your life anymore. That friend who sat next to you every day in middle school. That friend whose landline number you still remember. Friends with whom you played during the games periods in school. Friends you shared your lunch with. The ones you invited to your birthday parties when you were little. *It's strange how we just lose people over time—even the ones who were once closest to us.*



Unrequited love is painful, but sometimes, you make the pain grow deeper by not accepting that there are thousands of stars in the universe, but some stars just aren't yours to wish upon.

Healing isn't about love as much as learning to deal with the absence of it.

There's so much learning that takes place because of leaving.  
But there's so much loving one has to do before finally learning to leave.

Waking up without you kills the sun in my soul.  
Only darkness is here to embrace me in your absence,  
please come back home?

Sometimes, reminders of lost love would pelt you like a sudden downpour, and it would become tough to hold yourself together. In such times, you'll learn how even the most beautiful memories can grip you by the throat and strangle you. But you can still hold onto hope and go on to live because you're stronger than you think.

*—note to self*

I've gotten better at saying *goodbye* ever since you left. Funny how someone who didn't have feelings for you can make you stop feeling too deeply for anyone ever again. Funny how someone you didn't want to let go of taught you how to be okay with watching people leave.

*You're so used to their presence that, despite knowing it's been months since they told you they don't love you anymore, you wake up in the middle of the night hoping to find them sleeping next to you.*

You miss their arm around your waist. It's been a while since they've pulled you closer to themselves, but you've never allowed your heart to be pulled away from them. You're not used to dreams anymore because sleeping without them is a nightmare nobody prepared you for. You want them to reach out to you, but you know they've moved on. You want them to see the love dying to slip through your fingertips and fall into their heart. You want them to know that every night hurts a little more than the previous one, and you don't know how many more nights you can afford to spend without them before it hurts too much to survive. What nobody tells you is that when you've to let go of someone you still have so much love for, it kills you from the inside.

I may never find the kind of love you offered to me, but I hope I find the kind of love I've always dreamt of having—the kind of love that was too much for you to give me. The kind of love that's greater than a bird's love for her wings. The kind of love that transcends everything you were too scared of. The kind of love that doesn't leave you yearning for more but ensures you've got a wide smile on your face every day. You told me that you loved me, but you couldn't ever love me the way I deserve to be loved. My heart can't belong to you if you choose to make it feel heavy on some days and lighter on others. My heart can't bloom in places where storms seldom stop and the sun shines only when it's convenient. *I've got a heart that has loved gentleness for too long to settle for a love that makes me feel heavy.*



I'm afraid there was never a space  
in your heart reserved for me.  
There was just space,  
and you'd be okay  
with anybody else  
staying there too.

Whenever I've fallen in love, it's been one-sided. I've dated people. I've lived with them. I've spent Valentine's Day with them and taken trips with them. But whenever I've fallen in love with them, it's been one-sided. I've got the habit of always feeling more than the other person. I author my own pain by always giving out more than I ever receive.

What terrifies me is the possibility of feeling so deeply for someone once again that I'm physically incapable of not talking to them or reaching out to them despite knowing things are over. I don't want to feel the kind of love that ends with me trying to cope with a seemingly endless autumn that I've almost died coping with before.

I hate how now whenever someone tells me that they love me, I tell them that they don't. I've started considering the words 'I love you' as something people say to each other way too often without being certain if they're going to stay with each other.

When there's too much sadness inside you, you try to go back to the source of your sadness because they were once your happiest place. Please don't go back to them. Reaching out to them will only water your sadness; it won't make it wither away. Sometimes the person who used to be your happy place doesn't want you to be happy anymore, and you can't do anything about it other than slowly learn how to be happy alone.

You've kept hundreds of books, movie cassettes, old perfume bottles, and thousands of photographs. There's room for so many things, but no space for me. *You're capable of so much love, but you still choose not to love me.*

I'd cry in front of you, and you'd hug me so I'd stop.  
If you cared about me enough to hug me,  
why didn't you care enough to stop hurting me?

When someone asks me what I am most afraid of, it's not the things that have never happened, but the ones that I'm scared will happen again. Like my father not being nice to us. My relatives telling me all those things I wouldn't say to someone, even if they broke my heart. Being loved and left again. Crying silently—head buried in my pillow, so nobody would figure out I'm in pain. I'm not scared of the unfamiliar, but of the things that have happened too many times to me to ever get over them.



The intimacy of lying in bed together and doing nothing. There's music playing on the laptop, but you couldn't care less. Your head rests in their arms as if it's the only place it was meant to be. You realize you've not felt this safe since you were little. You realize this is all you've ever wanted—the comfort of being held by someone who you know won't hurt you.

I love the questions that begin with, 'Remember when'.

*Remember when we were too drunk to even walk straight? Remember when I called you at 3 a.m. to ask about how you make your special noodles? Remember when we stayed up all night trying to find a movie but ended up rewatching episodes from our favourite sitcoms all over again?*

Such questions are proof that someone remembers us. That the memories we create with some people mean just as much to them as they mean to us. That they also cherish the bond we share.

I think your first heartbreak happens when, as a kid, you watch people around you be mean to your mother. That's your first meeting with helplessness and pain—watching the person closest to you be hurt repeatedly and not being able to do anything about it.

Sometimes, you need to remind yourself that your heart doesn't deserve to ache this much. You need to remind yourself that pain isn't the currency for ensuring someone continues to love you.

I want the kind of comfort where we can say anything that comes to mind without thinking twice. Let's make mistakes, mess up recipes, say the wrong things at the wrong place and speak our hearts out during arguments. Let's fall in love with everything that we're used to hiding from the world. I want to be myself around you, knowing I'll be loved the same regardless. Knowing that you wouldn't want me to hide my heart. Knowing that you'll always love me despite all my flaws.

You would say the meanest things to me during every fight, and I would wonder how someone who claimed to love me could hurt my heart like that over and over again.

With time, I understood that I'm physically incapable of being mean to someone I love. With time, I understood that I deserve someone who chooses not to hurt me. I deserve someone who doesn't forget that they love me, even in the middle of a fight. Especially in the middle of a fight.

I spend my time wondering what I'll do without you. And that's my problem. I don't appreciate people as much as I wonder how I'll glue the pieces of my heart back together after they're gone.

Growing up is about realizing that there'll be too many moments when you'll be all alone. You'll take the metro for the first time in a new city and miss your best friend from school. You'll celebrate your birthday away from your parents and find yourself missing that small cake your mother would bake despite all the music and booze. You'll fall sick and go to the hospital alone. You'll fail a test and not have someone to hug immediately. I hope you understand that the absence of people in specific moments of your life doesn't equate to not being loved. It's just a part of life. *A major part of growing up is learning to be on your own.*



You don't deserve an anxious heart, sleepless nights, pillows drenched in tears and a crushed self-esteem. You don't deserve someone who doesn't love you enough to choose not to consciously hurt you. You don't deserve someone who discards your feelings like people discard dead flowers in the trash. Your feelings are flowers that deserve to be preserved between the pages of journals. You deserve someone who waters your feelings every day. You deserve someone who holds your heart so gently that you forget how terribly lonely it once felt.

You'll try for months to make them understand your love language. You'll beg for reassurance, and they'll make you feel like you're asking for too much. You'll ask them to hug you because you know you wouldn't get one otherwise. You'll try to find moments to kiss them, hold them, and constantly yearn to be loved the way you want to be loved. Years later, you'll find someone who'll enter your life with arms full of love, sunshine in the pocket of their jeans and a heart full of affection, and you'll realize how foolish you were for trying to make a soulmate out of someone who didn't understand your soul.

Painkillers replace lullabies as you grow up. But what do you do when you carry pain in places where diclofenac cannot reach?

Trying to understand you was like reading Shakespeare's sonnets for the first time. You wore ambiguity the way butterflies wear their wings. Over time, I understood that understanding you was about reading between the lines. Re-reading your heart is my favourite thing of all time.

There's an old man who lives next door and loves express trains. He tells me how he'd go to his hometown every time he didn't feel okay. He tells me he would travel back and forth between Jaipur and Ajmer every day. He'd work in Jaipur but leave his heart back in Ajmer. He tells me he has spent more time travelling than he thought he would. But I can't help but wonder if his kids don't love express trains as much as he does. He's too old to travel, and they never visit him.

*Some memories are like old film cassettes that play in your heart.*

You can't help but feel too many things all at once when they play on random days. It's a summer afternoon and you're having pancakes. You're running late for work and all you can hear is traffic. You're sitting with your friends and laughing about something you can't focus on. The cassettes play anytime. Mostly when you least expect it.

I remember the moles on your cheeks that looked like stars in the night sky. I remember how your torso felt like you carried oceans in you; if I held you a little longer, I'd drown and never come back to myself again. I remember how you breathed life into me merely by calling out my name. Your voice was a prayer that could bring atheists to churches, and persuade time to stand still, breathe and simply listen. *It was as if all the sunflowers had fled from the fields to sit in your soul, so you could add light to an otherwise lifeless world.*

On days when life stops making sense, I hold your face in my palms and caress your hair gently. I remind myself that even if everything falls apart, our hearts will remain in place—always next to each other. We'll always be slow dancing together amidst all the chaos.



Will loneliness and abandonment always be the aftermath of expressing how I feel? Will my feelings always be too much for people, even the ones who promise they won't ever leave?

You grow up and your mother isn't your best friend anymore. And that breaks her heart more than it breaks yours.

Because she thought she'd be that person for you forever—the one you'd come to after every heartbreak or bad day. The one who'd happily put all the pieces of your heart together. Over time, she lost a best friend because you thought she wasn't 'cool' enough for you to pour your heart out to her. Because you assumed she wouldn't understand you. If your mother genuinely loves you and was once your best friend, please don't do that to her. Please don't forget who was there for you when you weren't 'cool' enough.

I laugh my heart out to convince myself that I can be happy without you.  
But I know if you were here, you'd ask me if I'm alright. You'd know the  
laugh isn't real, and you'd hold me tight.

With time, you'll learn how to read books in cafés alone. You won't miss being held by them. Your irises won't carry confessions of still being in love with them. Sadness won't stay stitched into your soul. With time, you'll start saying goodbye with a smile on your face. You won't bother about who left and who stayed.

You're scared because you know you'll never stop feeling this way for them. The way you wouldn't blink your eyes in front of them if you could because every millisecond spent watching them heals your soul. The way because of them, there's a sunflower field in your heart that's so gorgeous, Van Gogh would be jealous. The way they make you feel secure, and you've yearned to feel this way your entire life. *You're scared because you know they feel the same way about you, but you are too used to watching people fall out of love with you.*

I want to leave sunflowers at your doorstep to remind you that there's light, hope and beauty outside, no matter how hurt you've been. That the world isn't a bad place just because you fell in love with someone who never ceased to make you feel bad about yourself.

To the next person who falls in love with me:

Please don't be reckless with my heart is all I can say. People leave when they realize that I overthink and feel everything too deeply, but I really hope you stay.

My best friend once told me, '*I don't think anyone can ever love me.*' The 'can' broke my heart.

How heartbreaking it is to feel that it's impossible for someone to fall in love with you. That just because you don't fit into a box, you don't deserve to be held with love and warmth. That love comes with looking a certain way, and if you cannot change your appearance, people cannot choose to love you either.



Your heart is the size of a fist, but there are mountains of grief growing inside it. Your heart has a memory that suffocates you. When your father tore apart your mother's poetry books. When your grandfather told you that you'd always be unhappy. When that teacher in tenth grade told you that you'd never get better academically. There's so much more in your heart than you think. And that's why it always feels heavy. That's why every time your heart breaks, you feel like the entire world is breaking too.

There are flowers dying on your dining table waiting to be given to the person you say you're not in love with.

Collect the pieces of your heart the way birds collect tit-bits of food from neighbourhoods that reek of sadness, gift-wrap them all and give it to the person you love.

Because winter is the most  
gorgeous thing to experience as long as  
someone keeps your heart warm, and love sometimes leaves no room for  
sadness,  
because there's a soulmate  
to hold you gently through it all.

It's okay to watch sunsets alone, have a pizza at your favourite place without company or travel to the places you've always wanted to go without taking anyone along. *Dreaming about meeting your soulmate shouldn't come at the cost of postponing your dream life.*

*Houses without windows can't suffocate you like homes without love.* When you've dinner-table arguments but never dinner-table conversations. When your father doesn't laugh when you accidentally drop maple syrup on your shirt but punches you in the throat. When the pieces of your heart make the carpet in the living room. You don't understand love until you get out of the places with people that don't want to love you. You don't find love until you realize warmth can't ever radiate from places and people that have only ever made you feel unlovable.

Hearing your heartbeat is like hearing the universe asking me to stay a little longer. A sign that someone loves me so deeply, my little heart is finally healing.

I wish you could *literally* wear your heart on your sleeve.  
I want to be sure you feel the same way as I do.

Some people are like that. They don't like mushrooms on their pizza like you do. They don't listen to music while taking a shower. They don't use cursive letters. They are okay with missing a comma here and there. They don't cry to songs like you. They're nothing like you, but there's nobody you'd rather be with than them. *Because while everything's different, your hearts are alike.* Nobody can ever make you feel the way they do.



When you hurt me, I keep it to myself. I don't cry. I don't yell back at you. Instead, I ask you to hold my hand and pull me closer to you. Because I know if I told you that you're hurting me, you'd stop holding me instead.

Girls like you deserve picnic dates and kisses in dusty libraries. Books wrapped in old newspapers with handmade bookmarks inside them. You deserve little flowers in your hair and a lot of hope in your heart. Long walks on silent streets. Dancing in the rain after the world has fallen asleep. ‘*Good morning*’ messages and random ‘*I miss you*’ texts. Girls like you deserve a love that turns you into the sky after the rain. Don’t settle for anything less.

Boys like you deserve flowers and soft kisses on your cheeks. Handwritten notes and snapshots on your refrigerator. Coffee that's a little too sweet and pancakes with extra maple syrup. You deserve love in its softest form—someone who holds your hand on busy streets, hugs you on nights when you cannot sleep and tells you you're going to be all right when life gets too overwhelming. Boys like you deserve a love that feels like sunshine. Don't settle for anything less.



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