

Open This Letter When You Feel Alone and Hopeless in the Heaviest Part of Midnight

Darling, you have not always been kept safe,
I know.

Somewhere inside you are still that little babe
Growing up on the farm
Hiding in the feed bags on top of the hay bales,
Waiting out the fight.

Your heart still hasn't healed from the last time you were
Vulnerable and deceived,
And that's ok. Not everything happens for a reason. The poets
Lied about that one.

But make no mistake about this: to feel any speck of gratitude for this life,
For this chaotic pilgrimage, is holy protest,
Is sacred revolution. To hope for better when the worst
Is having dinner
At your kitchen table, that's you building a medicine wheel
Around your enemies
And saying, you did not win. Darling,

You are imperfect and strange.

Terrifying in the way that you love, as impossible to imprison
As the tide.

The plague that tried to erase us, the anger that came
For your body,

The helplessness, that untamable falcon clung to your neck,
None of it bested you.

Your every inhale, your every strike of guitar string,
Every word

You commit to a page, every brush of paint to canvas and brick
Is a testament

To the fierce rising of a mind that refused the fall.
You are a candle
In a hurricane church. Your existence is an inextinguishable
Burst of stardust.
Say this out loud, right now, say: I am breathing. Say:
I am as glorious
As the weapons of hate are powerless.
I am an abalone shell
Glittering diamond in the rubble. I am a king
Amidst a million fallen crowns.

Answer me this: how many hands have you held
Tender while they cried?
How many have you taken into your home
And warmed by the fire?
How much have you given away, even when your pockets
Were empty?
You, unrelenting protector of creative impulse. You,
Resolute rising bird
Of artist flock. You, swarming storm of some beautiful and
Dangerous god we can't yet name--
How many times have you forgiven yourself? How many times
Have you recovered?
Open your eyes and blink back the moonlessness, no matter
How thick and glutted.
Say Lucille's words with your whole throat open,
Say: *everyday*
Something has tried to kill me and has failed.
Say: I am not
What happened to me. I am not my mistakes.
I am not who I once was.
I am no one else's redemption. No one's accident. This life

is mine, I earned it.

I earned this feast. Memorize the names of your elders and know

They died so that you could live.

So that you could remember how to hope for different.

For better.

The Buddhists teach us that hope is not blind devotion

To a particular outcome.

Hope is the complicated bardo: an intermediary luminescent state

In which we embrace both

The messy mayhem and the promise of pure, illuminated joy.

That's the battle that strains us.

The challenge of choosing love when these days keep teaching us

How to hate.

I can't erase the midnight for you, my beloved darling.

The sand will slip

Through the glass no matter how hard we pray

For a pause.

This is the one life we have. And it will keep getting lived

Whether you feel like the kite

Or the hand that holds the string. But what if you could be

The wind?

Will they name you crazy for how reckless you flaunt your liberation?

Let them.

Refuse to apologize. Refuse to lay down your arms

When there's still so much fight

Left in your bones. Let them hear you. Invite them to shout

As you shout:

I am alive. I am resilient. I am infinite and wild and today is not the day

I give up.

Can you hear how your voice echoes through the halls?

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Can you hear your sound
Getting louder and more brilliant with each revolve?
Don't get quiet now.
Generations of children in every direction
Are listening for your call.

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