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Image not available forColour: To view this video download Flash Player Was die Spuren auf unserer Seele über uns verratenWir alle tragen Narben auf und in uns. Sie sind die Spuren unserer Verletzungen und gleichzeitig der Beweis dafür, dass es Heilung gibt. In unseren Narben liegt unsere Kraft – davon ist Bianca Sparacino überzeugt. In ihren mitfühlenden Texten befasst sie sich mit den erschütternden Erfahrungen von Verlust und Schmerz, und zeigt mit ihren ermutigenden Gedanken Wege zu Selbstliebe und Neubeginn auf. Ein hoffnungsvolles und tröstendes Buch, eine inspirierende Begleitung in Zeiten von Krisen oder Trauer. More titles and copies may be available to you. Sign in to see the full collection. × Copyright © 2018 Bianca Sparacino. All rights reserved. Published by Thought Catalog Books, a publishing house owned by The Thought & Expression Company. Cover design by Josh Covarrubias and art direction by KJ Parish and Chris Lavergne. It was printed in 2018 and published in an edition of 3,000 copies. ISBN 978-0-9964871-9-1 I am a firm believer in there being beauty in the contrast. In the light and the dark days. In the hope and the hurt. In the fire and in the ash. I am a firm believer in the fall and in the rise; in the sin and in the saving. I am a firm believer in the broken, the people who hold their pieces together with belief, who bandage their fear in faith. I am a firm believer in the souls who have always managed to protect their soft; who have always known, even when it ached the most, that their wounds were healing them, that the hardest parts of life were growing them from the inside. I am a firm believer in there being beauty in the contrast—you have not lived until you have died. The world is going to give you beauty, but it will also give you pain. The greatest lesson you will ever learn is that this, too, is a gift. It is all I have lost that has set me free. It is difficult to move on. It breaks you down in ways you never expected to be broken before. But when this happens, do not fear the rebuilding. Do not lament the pieces of yourself that you have lost, the pieces of yourself that were left over. Instead, splay them across the kitchen floor. Look at each and every one of them. Look at the memories, look at the sacrifices. Look at it all from a place of healing, and choose to create yourself again. Shape your spine, stronger this time. Shape your heart, bigger this time. Shape your eyes, capable of seeing more than you ever imagined. Shape your mouth; give it the capacity to say all of the words you never allowed yourself to say. Begin again. Your body is more than just a graveyard for those who cou; ld not love it. Your heart is more than just a cemetery for those who disappeared. I am not impressed by beauty anymore. It is not difficult or extraordinary to turn someone on. However, if you have the ability to inspire me, if you have the ability to stimulate my mind and stir my thoughts—well, that makes you magic. You are the one who built your walls. Don't ever doubt for a second that you have the capacity to tear them down. Goodbye is hard sometimes because the action of leaving is so permanent, and yet that person still occupies so much of the space within your chest. Goodbye isn't final, it isn't a finish line you have to step over in order to forget. See, you can't unlove someone. You can't get their scent out of your pillowcases, can't unlearn their name and forget what it felt like to be immersed in the hope and beauty of another human being. People never stay gone. They show up in street corners, they show up in familiar laughs and the booth at that one restaurant where you first held their hand. Goodbye isn't as simple as many make it seem; goodbye isn't really goodbye, not for someone who still cares. Not for the person left in the aftermath of a hurricane they once loved. You do not always have to be fire, do not always have to burn those who come too close. Remember— you are seventy percent water; you have it within you to be soft. From time to time, trace the scars life has left you. It will remind you that at one point, you fought for something. You believed. The moment you truly start to believe that you are deserving of happiness, of love, of something bigger than what you have been settling for, your heart weeps a little—as if it is the first time in years it has been able to lay down its arms; as if it is the first time in years it has been able to rest. Life has taught me that the people who often love the hardest are the ones who have been hurt the most. It took me a long time to realize that not everything in life is meant to be a beautiful story. Not every person we feel something deep and moving with is meant to make a home within us, is meant to be a forever. Sometimes, people come into our lives to teach us how to love; and sometimes, people come into our lives to teach us how not to love. How not to settle, how not to shrink ourselves ever again. Yes, sometimes people leave—but that's okay, because their lessons always stay, and that is what matters. That is what remains. Please, whatever you do—just feel what you are feeling right now. Do not reach into yourself and pull out what life has planted within you. Instead, reach into yourself and cradle it. Give it a home within you. Let is stay for as long as it needs. Do not rush it out the door. Just be with it. Whatever it is—whether it is a name, or a memory, or an ache that you cannot seem to part with. Do not harden yourself to what has affected you so deeply in life. This is the important part. Be thankful for it. Be thankful for the songs you hear that make your soul bubble over with nostalgia. Be thankful for the morning light and how it hits that one spot on your bed that holds the ghosted memory of someone who was once your favorite thing. Be thankful for your heart and how at one point, you could feel it beating against your rib cage for ten days straight because your bones were blushing at the thought of someone's hand within yours. Let these moments seek refuge in your soul. Let them wash over you. Let them remind you that at one point, you embraced what it meant to love without abandon. Let them remind you that at one point, you tried for something. I will know my work is done when they ask: "Do you like yourself" and with ruthless confidence, with a certainty that comes from every tender part of who I am, I answer, "yes." They didn't leave you because they didn't love you. They left because when they were fourteen they had their best friend come to them with a heart that never healed. At fourteen they held a human being, trembling and broken in their paper arms, and they feared the day they would mourn a last goodbye, a last embrace. They left because they saw how a cold flame could create a house fire in the hollow bones of someone who gave every inch of themselves and still came up short. No, they didn't leave you because they didn't love you. They left because when they were seventeen they finally noticed the distance between their parents at the dinner table. At seventeen they had to tell their younger brother, sister, that sometimes things get tough, that sometimes mistakes hang heavy in a rib cage and it causes people to run away. They left because at a tender age they were taught that "I love you" doesn't always mean, I'll stay." They didn't leave you because they didn't love you. They left because at twenty-one they read an article about a dating app that mentioned how 42% of its users already had partners. At twenty-one they read that plan Bs and second options were always on the forefront, always in the back pocket of someone who was holding the hand of a man, a woman, who slept soundly beside them at night. They left because they convinced themselves that there would always be another, someone better suited, someone better looking, someone more successful; it would only ever be a matter of time. See, they didn't leave you because they didn't love you. They left because at twenty-five they watched their grandfather empty out the oceans within him at the grave of his high-school sweetheart. At twenty-five they watched how he slowly deteriorated, how loss crept into his heart like a bleak December frost; how the doctor said that her demise killed him before old age ever had the chance. They left because they finally understood how cruel it truly was to love something that death could touch. Trust me when I say they didn't leave you because they didn't love you. They left you because they never learned that they could be better than their past. They left you because they couldn't convince themselves that they wouldn't turn into their parents, that they wouldn't wake up one day and want to flee. They left you because they never saw devotion win, they never saw passion triumph. No, they didn't leave you because they didn't love you. They left you because they didn't love themselves enough to believe that they could be different. How they make you feel says a lot about them and nothing about you. Trust me when I say someone who makes you question if you are worthy of being loved is not worthy of being loved by you. In a world that seeks connection, we oddly avoid eye contact, we time our text responses in order to protect ourselves from seeming too eager or too interested, and we hold our feelings back because we don't want to seem overly emotional or unreasonable. We silence our instincts, and at the end of the day instead of feeling good about ourselves, we feel alone, we feel misunderstood. Remember—it is okay to be emotional, to seek help, to confidently tell someone you enjoy being around that you are infatuated with them. There is nothing wrong with vulnerability, with being human, for that is what creates depth within our relationships, and that is what ultimately unifies us. We use fate as an excuse, as an apology for all of the people we have walked away from; we speak the years from our minds, and say, "if it was meant to happen, it would have." But we are wrong, because fate does not exist; only effort does. and that is where we fail each other. Because if it was meant to happen, we would have made it happen. If it was meant to be, we would have stayed. We would have fought. If you are ever going to survive, if you are ever going to come out of the chaos, you have to collect the moments that have inspired you deeply in life and fold them into yourself every night for safekeeping. When the sun seems to rise a little slower and your days are filled with darkened hope, reach into the core of you and remember the warmth. Remind yourself that things will be light again. You can say you have healed not when you have forgotten, but when you have forgiven. There is still time for you. I don't care what you have been through; I don't care about the wounds or the pain or the scars or the hurt. None of that makes what you are a waste, none of that discounts the fact that you have purpose, that you mean something. Please, don't ever forget—even when you ache all over, even when the world is not kind—you are needed here. You are needed. You guard yourself from sadness, not realizing that you have closed yourself off to all of the happiness the world is trying to give to you. Stay open; it is how the light gets in. Because you have been hurt before, you fall in love with anyone who shows you their soul. You know how much courage that takes. Do not be ashamed of what your survival looks like. Do what you have to do. You are clawing yourself out of the ache, cutting the pain from the bone. It is never going to be pretty, but I promise—it will always be worth it. The things that hurt you may have left scars, but they did not destroy you. You survived, and there is hope in that. If you care about someone, make them a priority. Make them a priority not just when it is easy, but when it is difficult as well. If you care about someone, show up for them when you say you will. Show up for them when they least deserve it, because that is when they need it the most. Just be there for them—not because you have to be, but because you want to be. See, the easy things in life hold no weight. It is easy to love someone when they are perfect, when they are soft and light, when they are filled with hope and happiness. But loving someone when they are wearing their flaws like an apology, when they are breaking down, or when they are carrying hurt within them—that is when it means the most. That is when you must show up for them. If you care about someone, put your phone down. Sit across from them at dinner and listen to them. Give yourself the space to dive with them into deeper conversation, into the kind of quality time that makes you feel like you are the only two people in the world. Connect with them. Please, if you care for someone—connect. Do not allow yourself to be pulled from those moments. Do not allow yourself to settle for talking about the weather or the monotony of life. Ask them what they dreamed about the night before. Debate with them. Teach them something new. Sit them down and laugh with them, lose yourself in time. Be present, not only in your body, but also in your mind. Be there with them. If you care about someone, let them know that you do. Always remind them that you appreciate the very heart within their chest. Always remind them that you want to protect who they are, that they are your favorite thing, and do not just do this with words. See, words are simple; they are easy, they are flat. When it comes to someone else's soul, do not fill their head with silken poetry, do not string vowels and consonants together just to appease them. Show them that they matter to you; take action in making sure that they feel loved, in backing up what you speak. If you care about someone, if you truly care, just be good to them. Too many people selfishly take hearts into their own hands and they fail to protect them, they fail to nurture them. Too many people grow comfortable and complacent; they lose sight of what they have. They take and take, and they rarely think about what they are giving. They forget that love is not something that should ever be done with one foot out the door. They forget that love should never be given in bare minimums. Please, if you love someone, stand up for that. Be honest with them. Choose them every single day, and if you cannot, or if things change, let them go. Let them go, because if they love you deeply they will not have it within them to stop trying, they will not be able to walk away, for it is a fatal flaw in people who love with everything they have. They must be set free. Do not keep someone around only to love them in halves. They are better off giving their love to someone who has room within their chest to accept it, and you are better off figuring out what your heart desires before you try to open it to someone who will never stop trying to give you the world. You are the only person who gets to decide if you are happy or not—do not put your happiness into the hands of other people. Do not make it contingent on their acceptance of you or their feelings for you. At the end of the day, it doesn't matter if someone dislikes you or if someone doesn't want to be with you. All that matters is that you are happy with the person you are becoming. All that matters is that you like yourself, that you are proud of what you are putting out into the world. You are in charge of your joy, of your worth. You get to be your own validation. Please don't ever forget that. Stay soft. Do not let the things that have hurt you turn you into a person you are not. All of the love you have given to the wrong people— it will find its way back to you. "It's funny how that works," she said. "The human body is made up of billions of cells, and yet it simply takes one person—one voice, one look, one text or smile, to completely unravel you. We think we are these overly intelligent, complex creatures, but at the end of the day we all just want connection. We all just want to know that we aren't going to be alone." Listen—you are going to find the things that make you feel free in life. You are going to fall into the deepest love—with another human being and with yourself. You are going to discover the things that fill you with purpose, the things that make you want to rise each morning. You are going to feel hope cracking within all of the dark the past has buried within you; you are going to uncover all of that light. You are going to be okay. You are going to figure things out. But you must understand that there is no set timeline for this kind of discovery, there is no checklist for this kind of growth. You may fall in love tomorrow, or you may fall in love ten years from now. You might discover your passion the day after you graduate, or you might be fifty years old before you finally find the thing that causes your heart to ache with happiness. Whatever it is—just give it time. Be gentle with yourself; do not rush the way you stretch into the person you are becoming. Do not scramble to fill your life with things that are not for you just because you feel like you are falling behind. You are not falling behind—you are falling into yourself. So please, keep going. Everything that is meant to be yours will be yours. It will come. It will come. The people who break you are not the ones who are going to put you back together. I am not going to wait for someone to make me whole. Instead, I am going to take all of the love I have been giving everyone else, and I am going to give it to myself. Lose yourself in books, in art, in the haze of new horizons. Lose yourself in curiosity, in knowledge, in passion. Lose yourself in feeling it all; lose yourself in the world, in the stories and the lessons it has to teach you, but never lose yourself in love; never lose yourself in another person. You are your own home—please don't ever forget that. Be gentle with yourself; you are still learning. When you need to heal, unhinge your ribcage. peer into the soul of you, find out where it hurts, and quietly whisper into the ache— "it's okay. it's okay." Listen—I know what it is like to have a heart that does not know how to stop burning, to have hands that want to give until they have nothing left. I know what it feels like to have firewood for fingers, what it feels like to want to touch every cold soul you see, what it feels like to want to reignite every bone in a body. I know what it feels like to be misunderstood within this—to be loved and unloved because of your heat; but you cannot give up on yourself, you cannot ignore all that surges within you. If the world does not understand the way you burn, do not hide yourself away. Instead, set it on fire. Show them what you can do with all of that hope inside of you. You are allowed to take up space. Own who you are and what you want for yourself. Stop downplaying the things you care about, the hopes you have. Own your passions, your thoughts, your perceptions. Own your fire. Stop putting your worth in the hands of others; stop letting them decide your value. Own saying no, saying yes. Own your mood, your feelings. Own your plans, your path, your success. Never back down from expressing yourself, from saying your name proudly. Never stop elbowing your damn way into this big world, because you belong here. You matter. And I know that everything is temporary, that all we have is fleeting— emotions, thoughts, even human beings. But it is hard not to get attached to that which makes us feel like we have a purpose; it is hard not to want to hold on to all that makes us feel real again. One day you will meet someone who will break down your walls and stare into the depths of you. One day they will see the bruises on your soul, will hear about all of the terrible things you have done, and you will expect them to leave, but they won't. They won't. One day, you will meet someone who looks into the damage, who sees the wounds, the dark, and they will love you anyways. They will love you. Congrats On Waking Up Today, For Courage Is In The Little Things Listen—sometimes courage is as simple as opening your eyes in the morning. Sometimes it's as easy as making the effort to eat your breakfast without spelling their name in your cereal or breaking your teeth on their goodbyes. Sometimes courage is the way you fall in love with your sadness, how you let it rock you to sleep, how you feel it and face it and tell yourself every single night that you can overcome it, even if you feel like you can't. No, sometimes courage isn't a big declaration, a common accomplishment. Sometimes courage is the way you slowly comb them out of your hair; sometimes courage is hearing their voice in public and not turning your head or having your stomach feel like a shaken-up can of soda. Sometimes courage is smiling for your younger sister when your heart is breaking; sometimes it's telling her that love exists even on the days you simply don't believe it does. See, sometimes courage isn't climbing Mount Everest or changing the world. Sometimes your mountain to climb is made up of weekdays and months, made up of pushing yourself forward even when you want to nestle into the past. Sometimes changing the world means changing your world as gradually as you need to, as gently as you heal, because sometimes courage isn't made up of war and bloodshed; sometimes courage isn't made of combat. Sometimes courage is a quiet fight, a dim softness within you, that flickers even on your darkest days and reminds you that you are strong, that you are growing—that there is hope. Fall in love with someone who will take care of you—not in a materialistic way, but rather, fall in love with someone who will take care of your soul. Fall in love with someone who will take care of your mind, someone who will take care of your heart. Fall in love with someone who will take care of even the most chaotic parts of who you are. Sometimes, healing consists of sitting in coffee shops and writing the years from your mind. Sometimes, healing is laughing until you cry; it is kissing your friends' faces and being moved and inspired by your life. And sometimes, healing is rest; it is hiding from the world, it is having everything inside of you be still and quiet and eerily bare. Sometimes healing feels like nothing at all, like you are a silhouette of hope and hurt at the same time. Do not fight it. Whatever your healing looks like today, whatever it consists of—just allow it to be what it is. Just take care of yourself. Are there any rules when it comes to love? There is just one: Let it change you. Let it leave you better than you were before. Never lose sight of the fact that love, and only love, has the capacity to save even the most desperate parts of you. Love is your childhood home. Your favourite part on the couch, the same chair at the kitchen table. Love is your worn-in sweater, the way it smells after you hang it to dry in the garden. Love is the creak in the stairs, the hook in the entryway you always hang your coat on. But leaving makes a mess of it all; it rearranges things. Suddenly, the couch is different, and your favourite chair is broken. Your worn-in sweater is torn, and the clothing lines in the backyard have been blown down by wind. Suddenly, the stairs are quiet in the night, the hook is on the other side of the room. Healing forces you to move. Forces you to buy a different couch, forces you to replace the chair. Healing stitches together your worn-in sweater, patches it with new fabric, pieces of another story. Healing forces you to embrace the silence in the steps, the fact that you have to hang your coat in a different place from now on. Healing forces you to change, to leave behind the familiar. Healing forces you to rebuild. The truth is, when you continue to chase someone who does not want to be caught, you close yourself off to those who do. You close yourself off to the person who wants to know how many sugars you take in your morning coffee; you close yourself off to the soul that wants nothing more than to hear you singing off-key in the shower for the rest of their lives. When you continue to beg for the kind of love you have been giving someone all along, you close yourself off to the person who dreams of being your favorite thing; you close yourself off to the person who eagerly awaits a heart like yours—no matter how loudly it beats against your chest, no matter how messy or sensitive or soft it is. You close yourself off to the person who wants to be your safe place, your refuge; someone who wants to prove to you that love can stay, that love can heal the past, that love can be balanced and full and hopeful for once in your life. When you continue to chase those who do not want to be caught, you rip out pieces of your soul just trying to make it fit into the palms of someone who does not want to hold you. You bankrupt yourself for someone, closing yourself off from the human being who would have been able to see your worth all along; closing yourself off from the human being who would have loved you from the start. Be brave enough to heal yourself even when it hurts. If you want to fall back in love with yourself—focus. Focus on the things that compel you, the things that stir something deep inside of yourself. Focus on the people who inspire you, the ones who support you and encourage you to grow into the person you have always wanted to be. Focus on the things that hurt, the things that create noise in your life, and commit to distancing yourself from them. You have to be comfortable with walking away from the human beings and the thoughts that no longer serve you. You have to be comfortable with walking away from the chaos of it all. Focus on the things that make you feel safe. The music, or the films, or the hands that make you feel like everything is blooming and awakening within you. Focus on the things that make you feel real, the things that make you feel whole. Truly focus—on the things that make you feel hope, on the small spaces in time that make you feel like it is all going to be okay, like you have a reason and a purpose and a right to be in the world. Just focus on the things that make you feel glad you are alive; focus on the things that feed your soul, and not only will you experience love—you will become it. I hope you have the courage to walk away from anything that no longer serves you, from anything that fails to inspire your mind. I hope you have the courage to grow, to change, to do things differently than what is expected of you, to step back and seek out the kinds of things that ignite passion and excitement within your very bones. But most of all, I hope you have the courage to forgive yourself for all of the times you did not have the courage to believe that you deserved more than the kind of life you were settling for. Some mornings you will wake up and your scars will ache, and some mornings you will wake up and you will fumble with all of the hope dripping from your fingertips. This is your growing, your healing, the balancing of the scales within your bones. You will be high and you will be low, but you will never be empty. You will never be empty. How to deal with someone leaving—How to move on Well—you will wake up to them everywhere, and yet they will not be there anymore. They are gone and you are here, alone with yourself again. But this is what you do. You brush them out of your hair. You wash them off of your skin. You cough their name out of your lungs, sweep the ash of their goodbye outside of the home that is your body. Let the wind blow them away. Close the door softly and cry. Wildly, like you are a storm, and remember—though the rain and the sadness may seem like terrible things right now, they are always cleaning you. They are always cleaning you. I hope you find what you're looking for out there. I hope you find the kind of happiness that exists on your own terms. I hope you truly take the time to figure out what moves you, what encourages your soul, what you deeply crave from life, and I hope you have the courage to chase that. I hope you have the courage to believe that you are deserving of everything you desire, that you are capable and worthy of curating the kind of life for yourself that sparks something within you. You have a fire inside of you—I hope you never let convenience, or comfort, or the easiness of standing still put it out. I hope you show the world what you can do with all of that passion inside of you. I hope you find the kind of love that makes you a softer person. The kind of love that makes you want to be a better man or woman, the kind of love that believes in you and supports you, that stands by your side. I hope you find someone who quickly becomes your favourite thing—someone who makes the fall less fearful, someone you can't help but choose every single day. I hope you find someone who shows you just how deeply you can feel, just how deeply you can love. I hope you find something real, because nothing is more beautiful than loving someone who loves you back. Nothing is more beautiful than loving someone who builds you a home in their heart. I hope you find acceptance. The kind that rings through your bones, the kind that quiets the voice inside of you that tells you that you are not good enough or that you are falling behind. I hope you forgive yourself for the mistakes you have made, for the past you keep alive inside of you. I hope you learn to let go—of the things you had to do in order to heal or to grow or to survive. You are doing your best. You are human. Please don't ever forget that. I hope you find the kind of moments that take your breath away. The kind of moments that change you. I hope you travel to places that cleanse you; I hope you go to concerts that ring through your bones and make you feel alive. I hope you connect with the small things—I hope you look at someone mid- conversation and you feel your stomach surge with the feelings you have for them. I hope you surround yourself with the kinds of friends that encourage your spontaneity, that are always there for you. I hope you live. Truly. I hope you don't hold back. There is so much to feel in this world. I hope you feel it all. But most of all, I hope you find yourself out there. I hope you figure out your heart, I hope you figure out your mind. I hope you learn how to be kind to yourself, how to embrace the journey you are on. I hope you learn how to be proud of the person you are becoming; I hope you learn how to be proud of where you are—even if it isn't exactly where you want to be. I hope you learn to fall in love with the process, with the messiness of life and the confusion of it all. At the end of the day, I hope you find what you're looking for out there. I hope your life inspires you. If you are learning about yourself, if you are experiencing new things and flourishing inside, so is your heart; and your heart is allowed to recognize that at a certain point in time, it may deserve something different than what it once wanted. Remember—you are allowed to change. You are allowed to walk away. You have dug your soul out of the dark, you have fought to be here; do not go back to what buried you. Yes, your healing is your own. It is your battlefield, your war, but you do not have to fight it alone. See, it is not you against the world—it never has been. The people in your life may not be able to disappear the hurt, may not be able to cut the darkness from your bone—but they can stand by your side while you save yourself. They can love you through the pain of it all if you let them. Let them. If it matters to you, if it is important to you, then it is valid. Think about all of the beauty you would not have seen if you had allowed yourself to stop fighting; if you had allowed yourself to give up. The truth is, you're not always going to be a good person. You're going to make a lot of mistakes. They will pile up within you and it will be in your nature to grip at them until your hands are bruised, but you must let them go. Please, let them go. One day you're going to see just how they conspired to grow you from the ground up. One day you're going to see how they never defined you; they only ever helped you to define yourself. Sooner or later you are going to fall back in love with your life. Sooner or later your chest isn't going to weigh heavy like an anchor within your body. Sooner or later, you will remember the lightness, the days that didn't end in aching, and that is when you will realize it, that is when you will understand—you survived. You don't need to look for the kind of love that patches your wounds and builds you a new home within your body. You can do that on your own. You have fallen and you have risen time and time again; you are the living, breathing fragments of your triumphs and your tragedies, stitched together through hurt and hope, and you still shine. You still shine. Even at your best, you will not be good enough for someone who does not have the capacity, or the will, to love you. However, and this is the part you must focus on—none of that matters. For even at your worst, when you are not a shining example of everything you want to be, when life is handing you hardships and hurt, the person who is right for you will still choose you. Even when you do not deserve it, the person who is right for you will still love you. Trust me when I say—when it is right, everything that you love ruthlessly will love you back with the same conviction. Trust me when I say—when it is right, the things you reach for in life, the things you deeply hope for, they will reach back. And I promise you, when that happens you will understand that all of the things you ached for that did not work out, all of the hearts that failed to appreciate the home you made for them inside of yourself, they were not the things that broke you, or ruined you, or made you less worthy. No, instead, you will see that they built you. They taught you about yourself. They led you to the person you were born to be, and they guided you to the person you were meant to be with. They shaped you. They challenged you. They grew you. Be the person who cares. Be the person who makes the effort, the person who loves without hesitation. Be the person who bares it all, the person who never shies away from the depth of their feeling or the intensity of their hope. Be the person who believes—in the softness of the world, in the goodness of other people, in the beauty of being open and untethered and trusting. Be the person who takes the chance, who refuses to hide. Be the person who makes people feel seen, the person who shows up. Trust me when I say—be the person who cares. Because the world doesn't need any more carelessness, any more disregard; because there is nothing stronger than someone who continues to stay soft in a world that hasn't always been kind to them. You're going to get hurt. There is no denying that. You're going to thrust yourself into situations that don't work out the way you dreamed, that cannot sustain the gravity of what you feel, and you're going to get hurt. But this is what your fear won't tell you— You're going to survive it. You're going to heal from the wound. The hurt doesn't last forever, though I promise you the "what ifs" will. If you don't take the chance, if you don't risk everything you have—you will always be an ocean of questions. You will always wonder. And trust me—life is too short for loose ends, for feelings that were never acted upon, gestures that were never taken. Get on the plane, send that person an I'm sorry, tell them you love them, drive all night to see someone in the morning. I don't care if it makes you vulnerable, if it exposes you. Expose yourself. Open the hell up. Let life fill you with hurt, with happiness; let it weather you, let it teach you. Let it inspire you, let it break you down and build you up. You are here to risk your heart. Please don't ever forget that. Your heart is a fragile thing that people have not handled with care, but this does not mean that you should turn around and break someone because you have been broken. Do not become the kind of person who hurts. Do not let the world make you hard. If they walk away, do not focus on the pieces of you that are missing, do not focus on the empty; the only way to survive the leaving is to love whatever is left of yourself, is to love whatever remains. This is me moving on. This is me accepting the ache of missing you. This is me waking up every single day and tackling the street corners we walked upon, the corner coffee shops we ate at, the sheets we wrapped ourselves in at night. This is me waking up every single day, aware of what is missing, but accepting of the fact that this is my life now, that this is the way things are going to be. This is me understanding that it is okay to have my heartbeat speak your name. This is me understanding that it is okay to miss someone who was once such a staple in my life. But this is also me understanding that life does go on. That one day I will hear the songs and smile, I will sleep in the sheets and they will no longer smell like you; one day I will fall in love again, one day I will look back on this and my hands will not shake with the heaviness of it all. This is me moving on. This is me accepting the fact that we will no longer make memories together. This is me coming to terms with the reality of a future without you. This is me understanding that you will do everything we had ever spoken about—you will live a life you are proud of, you will become the person you told me you hoped you could be, you will take the trips, you will experience all of the things you wanted to experience, you will love—deeply and wholly and with every inch of your patchwork heart, but all of that will happen without me by your side. This is me moving on. This is me accepting that you will, as well. This is me coming to terms with the fact that someone else is going to fall in love with your light, that someone else is going to be your biggest fan. This is me hoping that you will find the love you deserve. This me me hoping that you will find someone who inspires you and moves you and appreciates every stunning thing you are. This is me hoping that you find someone who stirs the deepest parts of your being, someone who is both your safe place and your biggest adventure. This is me hoping that you are happy, truly happy, one day. This is me moving on. This is me accepting that sometimes beautiful things end. This is me understanding that there is nothing I can say or do to fix that. This is me coming to terms with the fact that sometimes leaving is an act of love, too. That sometimes you have to walk away from something soft and hauntingly real, that sometimes hearts don't align. But this is me accepting that endings don't have to be messy. This is me understanding how incredible it really is—that for a moment in time, in a world of billions, two strangers were in the right place, at the right time, and something transpired between them. This is my heart swelling with the thought—that at one point in time, we were the lucky ones. At one point in time, we beat the odds. How do you find the right one in a world of 7 billion people? First—you become the right one. The rest will follow. Listen—whatever it is that makes you wake up, whatever it is that makes you feel a moment of peace or a glimmer of hope, just keep it close. Please, live for it. Make sure that you focus on it. Make sure that you make time for it. I don't care what it is. You have to understand that happiness does not have to be this big all-consuming thing. Sometimes happiness is your morning cup of coffee. Sometimes it is the smell in the street after it rains, or your favorite song played on repeat for three hours straight. Sometimes happiness is your friend's laughter or the way the sky looks through the trees in your favorite park. If it keeps you going, if it ignited something within you, it doesn't matter how small or grand it is. Just hold on to it. Let it save you. Some of the kindest souls I know have lived in a world that was not so kind to them. Some of the best human beings I know have been through so much at the hands of others, and they still love deeply, they still care. Sometimes, it's the people who have been hurt the most who refuse to be hardened in this world, because they would never want to make another person feel the same way they have felt. If that isn't something to be in awe of, I don't know what is. What a shame it truly is— that some of us have lived our entire lives under the impression that the love we have been searching for was to be found, first and foremost, in anyone but ourselves. When it comes down to it, I think if any of us are going to make it, we simply just have to believe. We have to believe in the power of the small things—in the comfort of a cup of coffee, in the calming, melted hues of a sunrise, in hearing our mother's voice on the other end of the phone after a long day. We have to believe that we can overcome whatever weight life ropes to our spines, whatever circumstances our choices or our shortcomings throw our way. We have to believe in love; we have to believe that we are worthy of it, that we are deserving of being chosen despite the insecurity or the flaws or the mistakes. We have to believe in our ability to take care of the people we care about; we have to believe that we are enough for them. We have to believe that we have permission to be whomever the hell we want to be, that we have the capacity to be truly, and deeply, happy. We have to believe that we aren't alone, that people see us for who we are and what we have the potential to be. If we're going to make it, we have to believe that we are growing. We have to believe that we are meant to be here. I hope you know that you are deserving of everything you want in life. You deserve to fall in love with someone who cares for you in the softest way, someone who drives you and believes in you and is always in your corner—not just when it is easy, but when it is hard, too. You deserve to be that person for yourself as well. You deserve to be surrounded by people who grow your mind, people who make you better because they push you to be better. You deserve the kind of confidence that makes you believe that anything is possible, the kind that empowers your voice and your ideas and your capacity to seek out the things that you desire. You deserve moments of pure and intense happiness, the kind that make you feel your heart beating against your chest, the kind that dizzy you and make you realize that everything will be okay. Because it will be. It will be. You deserve to be chosen. You deserve to be loved the way you love others. At the end of the day, you deserve to be inspired by your life. I hope you never forget that. I am no longer afraid of the mess this healing will create. I am here to unravel. I am here to unpack these bones. You are not broken, you are becoming. My god, I hope you find love. And I don't just mean that in regards to someone you wrap your tired bones around at night. I mean that I hope you find love in every aspect of your life. I hope you find it tucked into early morning sunrises and the smell of your favorite places. I hope you find it strung between the laughter you share with friends I hope it bounces off of you when you hug the people you care for I hope it swells within your rib cage whenever you hear your favorite song or discover something that moves you. I hope you fall in love with growth, and change, and the messiness, and the beauty of fucking up, and making mistakes, and becoming exactly who you want to be. I hope you find love in places that were once devoid of it, in places within yourself that you could have been softer to, kinder to, in the past. Because if there is one thing I have learned, it is that love is so much more than a boy or a girl who holds your heart. Love is everything around you. It is everything. It is quite simple. When it comes to anything in life—relationships, friendships, the work you do, the art you make—when it comes to anything, if it does not create an avalanche within your chest, if it does not move you and inspire you, if it does not come from the deepest part of who you are, it is not for you. It is not for you. In all honesty, I don't think the world changes—I think you change. And I don't think the messiness or the ache of living ever goes away; I don't think it ever disappears. I think you just get stronger. I think you just get better at not letting the dark stifle the light. I think you just get better at not letting the chaos control you. The truth is—sometimes love changes. The truth is, sometimes life gets hard and "I'll stay" turns into "I have to take care of myself right now." Sometimes, those who loved us beautifully cannot continue to do so. And that is okay. You have to understand that there are certain things in life you truly have to let go of. There are certain things in life you cannot control—and the heart of another person is one of them. Either someone chooses you or they do not. Either someone decides to fight or they do not. At the end of the day, you have to respect that. But you do not have to let it consume you. See, you may not be able to control the person you loved, but you can control yourself. You can control the way you unapologetically dedicate yourself to loving who you are and what you have to offer. You can control the way you move forward, the way you choose to believe that you are worthy of the love you have continuously put out into the world. You can control the way you choose to believe that all the love your heart has given was enough and will be enough for the right people. You can control how you grow from the loss. You can control how you survive it. So survive it. You are strong enough to do so. I am slowly learning what it means to be human. I am slowly learning how to forgive the past. How to accept that sometimes beautiful things end, that sometimes the timing isn't right, that sometimes the messiness of life gets in the way. I am slowly learning that endings aren't something to be upset about, but rather, I am slowly learning how to appreciate how damn lucky I was to experience something real and hopeful and light in a world that sometimes fails to be soft. I am slowly learning how to be alone. I am slowly learning how to wake up in the middle of the bed. How to make just one cup of coffee in the mornings. How to hold my own heart, how to take up my own space. I am slowly learning how to stop filling voids with other human beings, and instead, I am slowly learning how to confront the void itself. How to heal it. I am slowly learning what it means to be human. What it means to make mistakes and learn from them. What it means to be both happy and sad at the same time. I am slowly learning how to do the damn work. How to stop running from what is heavy and uncomfortable in my life. How to take the easy route less and less. How to grow myself, how to be a better person. But most of all, I am slowly learning how to just be in this moment. How to exist. How to understand that I cannot control life, that I can only experience it in both its light and its dark stages. I am slowly learning how to laugh and cry and feel through it all, how to welcome the confusion and the joy that come with loving and living and breaking. I am slowly learning how to accept where I am. I am slowly learning how to simply believe in the person I am becoming. The love you find within yourself will be yours forever. When you're wondering if loving someone was worth it, ask yourself this. If you could go back in time, if you could do it all over again, would you? Would you choose that person, would you choose that hope, knowing that you would also be choosing that hurt? Knowing that at one point in time, you were going to have to survive the loss of them, the ache of missing? Would you still risk for them? Would you still love them? Would you still stay up until 4 AM with them on the night you met, letting yourself fall? Would you still get on the plane? Would you still forgive and trust; would you still make the memories, would you still give them a home in your heart? See, if the answer is no, then maybe what you had was not love; maybe it was a lesson. Maybe you can find closure in that. But if your answer is yes, then ah—do not doubt if it was worth it. Do not make it any less beautiful in your mind, do not turn it into something you choose to forget. No, if you would do it all again, if you would still choose just a few more hours, just a few more days, just a few more years, despite the inevitable loss, then you had something most people never find in this lifetime. You had something worth the fight. So this is your life, and you are going to be both moved and confused by it. You are going to experience things that will inspire you and things that you will never quite come to terms with. You are going to love people that you will sometimes lose, but you will also find those who stay. Appreciate those people; let them know that you care. You are going to laugh until you cry; you're going to ache in ways you never thought possible; you are going to be exhausted by the chaos of it all and ignited by the beauty. You are going to be hurt, and you are going to hurt. Sometimes you will be the bad person. Sometimes you will be the one who makes the mistake. Sometimes you will have to give yourself your own closure. Sometimes you will have to let go. Sometimes you will have to find comfort in being alone, in being It looks like you're offline. 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