

September 9, 2025

Molly,

Because I have spent most of the two-and-a-half years we have known each other telling you that you weren't good enough and you needed to be different for me to be happy with you (which is despicable, by the way), it must sound unbelievable now when I say I want to be with you—you, really, as you are—more than I want anything in the world. It should sound unbelievable. It would be weird if it didn't. But I do.

I already explained in my long letter how fear made it hard for me to clearly see you and what you were trying to give me throughout our relationship. This year I had space to heal and recover from what made me afraid. And as recovery happened, I started to see the way you have loved me as I couldn't see it before.

It is strange to me too that this would happen the way it has. Not totally surprising—I obviously saw something in you that I felt I wanted and needed right away, at the beginning, when I first noticed you on the Parsons School of Design Masters in Fine Art class of 2023 pecha kucha Zoom call. But strange how long it took. This whole year you silently percolated more and more into my unconscious until I found myself driving back from Mohican with you in the passenger seat and you were playing early 2000s radio hits on your phone that I would normally be unable to endure at all and I was happy. It was strange to me that I felt so happy sitting with you, listening to music I hate, that reminds me of times I hated much more than I hate the music. I was actually happy and I didn't want to be anywhere else. I haven't felt that way in years.

I can imagine that might be more disappointing to you than it is meaningful. I should have been feeling that two years ago when we first met. Should you be overjoyed, now, that I've finally gotten comfortable enough with you that we can share the most basic experiences without me feeling distressed or let down? I can understand how it might look that way. But what it actually is, from my perspective, is a miraculous healing. You are an angel. I was in pain and hiding for so long, and by your constant presence and your faithful love for me you called me out of where I was hidden and yes, I could finally do something absolutely normal that other people do all the time with no pain whatsoever

but which, for me, has been impossible, not just with you but with anyone. I could drive down the road listening to stupid music I hate from a time that was bad for me and feel happy because it is happening with you.

I knew something had changed. It would be wrong, from my perspective, to imagine that what had changed was my love for you, in a straightforward way. The love is the same. It was there the whole time. You had just worked the handle of the door for so long to the room in me where the love was sealed, and that day it finally came open and some part of me stumbled out, gasping, amazed to see sunlight again. Yes, this was enabled by a year on my own, healing, recovering, and doing some important inner work. And it was completed by your ongoing love. That drive wasn't the only moment. It was part of a series of moments. Many of them hurt for one or both of us at the time. Now I can see that each one was a stage in the long uncurling of a blossom. Even Spain. Even the Las Vegas airport. Even my childhood bedroom in my dad's house together the first time after grad school.

Just because they are that for me doesn't mean they are that for you. The blossom may just be uncurling in me. The fruit may be nothing you want any part of now. You love me in a way, but maybe never again in that way. I did spend two-and-a-half years telling you that you weren't good enough. That's not an acceptable way to be with someone. I'm ashamed of it, and deeply, deeply sorry. You are a treasure and I mishandled you and it is sickening. It wouldn't and won't ever happen again but that might not be enough for you.

A garden grows between people when they love each other and then it gets bigger and turns into a world. But you can leave the garden any time. Eventually if one or both people leave it dies and all that is left is whatever petals you could press between book pages before the end. Maybe that is what is happening now. But it is not dead yet. Maybe the tree that bears the uncurling blossom has always just been in me. But maybe not. Maybe it is in our garden. Maybe it needs you there to live, and maybe if it lives there will never be anything more beautiful for either of us in the world. It feels like that to me now.

I can see the future. I stand on the horizon of time looking across big waters to a place we could get to. I was already halfway in this vision before August 24th—restless, loving

you, ready to be alive again, beginning to ache to leave this sweet little apartment in sweet little Westerville for something better—but when that day happened anything still asleep woke up in me and I was pulled forward in time to what can be. Now I can see it like I'm already there. The apartment with you in San Francisco. Trips to Yosemite, the Redwoods, a visit to Lewis & Clark to see where you were, a beach trip in Malibu or Oceanside, visiting your friends in New York, visiting my friends wherever they are then, visiting you at the pottery studio if you would let me, dinner with your parents, long walks through the neighborhood, hikes through Glen Canyon, a camping trip to the Sierra Nevadas, drives through the Southwest, scooping up cat once I've played with her enough for her to love me, scooping up two beautiful babies once we have them, kissing them on their beautiful golden heads and crying because they are so small and tender and beautiful, planting fruit trees in the backyard, planting herbs, making dinner, maybe even together if I can finally talk you into it, making songs together. But most of all lying with you in the dark, hearing you breathe, nuzzling into your hair, into the beautiful, human smell of you that I would know anywhere, nibbling gently on your shoulder because I want you so close you're inside me, I want to drink you up and I want you to drink me up and I want to lay on each other and in each other and be each other but not so much each other that I can't still wrap around you and feel the exact width of your shoulders, your ribcage, the exact diameter of your bicep, the exact roundness of your right shoulder in my palm, which I can feel now like it's here because I have felt it many, many times and it is already in me forever as long as our garden lives. I want to live in your life. I want you to live in mine. I want to die on the same day so we don't have to be sad for missing each other, which no one does I know, we will be sad, we will miss each other, and I want to miss each other when we don't have each other, and I want to miss you so much it makes me want to die and I do because I love you so much I want to inhabit your life. I want this future. Right now you are the only future I can see and I am not even a little bit interested in considering any other future at all ever. You are the only thing I can see. I sigh with relief writing that because I know it's true. I've said things like that to other people in the past wanting, really really wanting, to feel them, and almost feeling them, but not being sure, being too scared to be sure or maybe just actually not really feeling them and just wanting to. But I actually feel it now and I have no question. It's a relief to really know.

My relief has nothing to do with your feelings. I'm relieved to know, and afraid you don't feel the same at all. I used to feel like that should be impossible. That someone could feel absolutely and really in love with someone else, but the feeling absolutely and really is not reciprocated. It shouldn't be possible. But it definitely is. It's happened to me one other time and it's terrible. It could be happening now. What can I do. Nothing. Except say what I really think and feel to you, which is that I was wrong, blind, trapped, and stupid, and you made me better, and smarter, and made it so I could see, and let me out. You and a good deal of effort on my end for myself as well, to be fair. And now I see you, really you. Not a frustrating incompatibility I can't figure out how to match with. Not a list of problems we have to straighten out. Not a few qualities I like and a bunch of characteristics I don't understand. I see you as a person. You know how it is when you really see something. The first moment you see it, you see all of it, and the rest of the looking is just to try to call it something. If you forget the first moment, you never really see it again, you only ever see what you called it afterwards. But sometimes you are struck by a kind of lightning, the voice of God screams at you so loud you fall off your horse and go blind, and when you finally see again it is all the same colors but different, they look the same but you see them like you had never actually seen them before, because you had taken seeing for granted but now you know what it means to be able to see and you are so so glad you can and also because it's a miracle. They are the same colors and not the same because you really did get to see for the first time, again. They are your eyes but not the same eyes. They are the same eyes but they were never your eyes. The world isn't in front of your eyes anymore, your eyes are in the world and it is right here and you are in it and it is in you and it is you. So then you can see. Not just names and things you decided you knew when you looked before when you didn't know what it meant to see. Now you see and you just see and the names are things you have to have but you see something else that the names can't touch and you never stop seeing it, the lightning burned it into your eyeballs. I can see again, for the first time. It isn't just you. I can see people, things. Something has changed. It has been a long time since I could see like this. It is because of you. You spread the mud on my eyes and said the prayer. You washed it off and when I opened them you were the first thing I saw and I love you. You are perfect. You are robust, and complex, symmetrical in mind and asymmetrical in spirit, clear about the present, mindful of it's meaning in time, loving and loyal to your beloved people, a network in yourself of meanings and histories, an expert at integrating those histories into who you are now, carrying them on your body, in your

books, webbed inside your ribs, decorating your life with them, making altars. The angles of your bones protect your small and tender insides but you are ready to open yourself to good people. You build a world for you to live in and are ready to invite good people to live in it with you. You are angelic but not without darkness, strong in your grip but willing to open your hands, willing to cup the blood of a wounded friend, willing to try to put the broken instrument back together, willing to give up, willing to be invited back.

I think you are willing to be invited back, or I wouldn't be doing all of this. But I also think you are willing to give up when the time is right for you. I think you know what you need most, better than me or anyone else. Maybe it really isn't me. Maybe it really is someone else. And if it is I will cry and cry and cry and our garden will die but the garden of your own life has to live too. I have showed up when everything between us is already almost wilted to death because of my neglect and suddenly I'm trying to water and fertilize it all—I have no right to be upset with you for deciding you're finished with me.

But God I hope not. I love you more than my own life. I can't believe how long I couldn't see it. I was a fool. I see it now. It is a jewel shining at the bottom of the cave. I am stretching out my hand. I can almost reach it.

Luke