



ALL ALONG  
YOU WERE  
BLOOMING

*thoughts for boundless living*

A COLLECTION OF POETRY FROM

**MORGAN HARPER NICHOLS**



ALL ALONG  
YOU WERE  
BLOOMING

*thoughts for boundless living*

A COLLECTION OF POETRY FROM

**MORGAN HARPER NICHOLS**



## WORDS OF PRAISE FOR *ALL ALONG YOU WERE BLOOMING*

“There is abundant compassion and kindness in Morgan’s beautiful words. She writes and creates art as a loving act of service, and her readers can feel that love on every page. Morgan’s words will give you ownership of the life you’ve lived, enrich the life you have, and expand your possibilities for the life you want. She has a gift for making the toughest parts of life feel sacred and manageable and for making the good seem even more joyful. Her book will be a treasured companion for anyone who wants to live with more self-kindness and depth and will surely be revisited for many years to come. We are so lucky to have a creative soul like Morgan guiding us through life!”

—MARI ANDREW, AUTHOR OF *NEW YORK TIMES*  
BESTSELLER *AM I THERE YET?*

“Morgan is beyond talented with words that touch the heart, and this work is an extension of her unique gift. Every page is full of life and vibrant color, and each word is presented creatively and beautifully. This book is one of a kind and will leave you feeling simultaneously uplifted and challenged.”

—JORDAN LEE DOOLEY, NATIONAL BESTSELLING  
AUTHOR OF *OWN YOUR EVERYDAY*

“Every page of *All Along You Were Blooming* is visually stunning and profoundly evocative. Morgan Harper Nichols blends vulnerable reflections with ethereal elegance as she layers illustrations beneath her vulnerable poetry and honest musings on love, life, and spirituality. Prepare to have your heart opened by these delightful ruminations and your imagination inspired by her captivating images.”

—CHRISTOPHER L. HEUERTZ, AUTHOR OF *THE SACRED*  
*ENNEAGRAM: FINDING YOUR UNIQUE PATH TO SPIRITUAL*  
*GROWTH*

“*All Along You Were Blooming* is magic. Sure, it’s a book—paper, binding, words and all—but it’s actually more of a beautiful and brilliant beam of warm sunlight.”

—RYAN O’NEAL, SINGER-SONGWRITER, *SLEEPING AT  
LAST*

“I first discovered Morgan’s work when a close friend of mine printed out a part of her poem on a card and sent it to me:

You are wrapped in  
endless,  
boundless,  
grace.

Morgan had distilled a biblical truth into something clear, profound, and eternally uplifting. I knew there and then that I had to work with her. She has since created prose for *Esquire* that speaks to men in a way that evokes and inspires; challenging our readers to build a life with purpose.

This collection of poetry and prose by Morgan continues her *raison d’être*—to create work that gives hope. And I’m sure, just like me, you’ll find yourself taking pages from this book and placing them at your desk as a daily reminder: you are wrapped in endless, boundless grace. It’s like a hot water bottle for your weary soul.”

—NORMAN TAN, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF *ESQUIRE*  
SINGAPORE

“Morgan [Harper Nichols] lives, writes, and designs with the intention to meet you where you are while simultaneously offering a brand-new perspective. As her younger sister, I’ve experienced this firsthand with the way her captivating artwork and encouraging words filled our home. This book is a front-row seat to those endless expressions, beautifully laced in grace and truth.”

—JAMIE-GRACE, 2X GRAMMY NOMINATED  
SINGER/SONGWRITER, HOST OF *THE JAMIE GRACE  
PODCAST*

“Morgan always has the right words to say—and the perfect way of beautifully sharing those words in a way that speaks to my soul. And obviously countless others. I got goosebumps reading this book and look forward to picking it up for encouragement day after day for years to come.”

—BRANDEN HARVEY, FOUNDER OF THE *GOODNEWSPAPER*  
AND HOST OF THE PODCAST *SOUNDS GOOD*

“Morgan’s tender, intentional words feel like the salve our aching hearts all need reminding of. She is a mirror of the inherent goodness, worth, and divinity inside of all of us.”

—RUTHIE LINDSEY, SPEAKER AND COHOST OF THE  
*UNSPOKEN* PODCAST

“Have you ever read something and asked yourself, *How did she know?* That’s Morgan’s gift. Morgan Harper Nichols is changing the game for women around the world today. Her art speaks to the masses while simultaneously making you feel seen, heard, and understood as a human being. As a masterful encourager, permission granter, and inspirer, Morgan’s voice reaches readers with heartfelt encouragement and hope. With each thoughtful word, Morgan makes you feel more enough and less alone, and the world needs more of that.”

—JENNA KUTCHER, HOST OF THE *GOAL DIGGER* PODCAST

“With rare talent, Morgan Harper Nichols invites us into the reality that we’re magnificently loved—even while in process. *All Along You Were Blooming* provides both a balm to weary souls who need to hear they don’t have to have it all figured out, as well as a gentle encouragement to take the next right step. Morgan’s work reminds us that the magic of growth happens in process; and though it won’t be easy, each of us is worth the time it takes to bloom.”

—AUNDI KOLBER MA, LPC, THERAPIST AND AUTHOR  
OF *TRY SOFTER*

“Morgan’s words have a way of reaching into your soul and making you feel completely seen. This book will bring you comfort and peace and will make you feel not alone in this emotional human existence. This will spark inspiration and hope in your life.”

—CAITLIN CROSBY BENWARD, FOUNDER OF THE GIVING KEYS

“Morgan Harper Nichols has an incredible gift for speaking the truth that we are all trying to find the words to say. Each page is a beautiful pump of bravery and courage through both her writing and her art.”

—ASHLEY LEMIEUX, AUTHOR OF *BORN TO SHINE*,  
SPEAKER, ENTREPRENEUR

“*All Along You Were Blooming* provides stabilizing prose that will capture the hearts of those who crave stability, peace, and assurance in these uncertain times.”

—EKEMINI UWAN, PUBLIC THEOLOGIAN

“Morgan’s work reminds everyone who encounters it to lean in and trust the process. This book is a great reminder to bloom and flourish, despite the hardships that may arise. The world is lucky to have a collection as stunning as this one.”

—ALEXANDRA ELLE, AUTHOR AND POET

“Morgan’s voice is inspiring millions. Her poetry and art embody a truth that we all deserve to hear.”

—MILES ADCOX, CEO OF ONSITE

“Love and beauty pour from the words and art on the pages. Morgan’s book is a balm for healing, a step toward joy, and a reminder to care for and be gentle with ourselves and each other. The world and my soul could always use more of that!”

—AMENA BROWN, POET, AUTHOR OF *HOW TO FIX A  
BROKEN RECORD*, HOST OF *HER WITH AMENA BROWN  
PODCAST*.



# ALL ALONG YOU WERE BLOOMING

*thoughts for boundless living*

MORGAN HARPER NICHOLS

 ZONDERVAN<sup>®</sup>  
.com



ZONDERVAN

*All Along You Were Blooming*

© 2020 by Morgan Harper Nichols

Requests for information should be addressed to:

Zondervan, 3900 Sparks Dr. SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546

ePub Edition © November 2019: ISBN 978-0-310-45404-5

Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version<sup>®</sup>, NIV<sup>®</sup>. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.<sup>®</sup> Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. [www.Zondervan.com](http://www.Zondervan.com). The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.<sup>®</sup>

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Art direction: Jennifer Showalter Greenwalt

Interior design: Mallory Collins and Morgan Harper Nichols

20 21 22 23 24 DSC 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

## Information about External Hyperlinks in this ebook

Please note that footnotes in this ebook may contain hyperlinks to external websites as part of bibliographic citations. These hyperlinks have not been activated by the publisher, who cannot verify the accuracy of these links beyond the date of publication.

To my family, teachers, and friends around the world whose lives have enriched my own in countless ways. The pages of this book are inspired by the stories you have so generously shared with me. Thank you.



# CONTENTS

## INTRODUCTION

### **FOR THE HEART**

WHAT YOU FEEL

### **FOR THE MIND**

WHAT YOU THINK

### **FOR THE BODY**

WHAT YOU DO

### **FOR THE SOUL**

WHO YOU ARE



## INTRODUCTION

As a quieter, introverted type, I often thought that unless I had a certain charisma about myself, I could never show up in the world in a way that truly matters. Feeling this way sent me inward, deep inside my journals where I would create a song, a poem, or a painting that communicated all the things I could never quite figure out how to say during the day. With everything I created, there was always a tinge of self-doubt that kept me wondering, *Do I have anything worth sharing?*

A few years ago, on a particularly cold autumn day, I found myself in a pit of self-doubt. Yet I was beginning to realize that if I ever wanted to grow, I couldn't stay there. I realized that I could spend the rest of my life doubting myself, or I could make the brave decision to work through self-doubt and allow myself to be stretched in ways I had not been before. I took a deep breath and wrote an Instagram message to the people who were following my work. I invited them to tell me their stories and, one by one, I would write something for each of them. I began this project that same day, and I haven't looked back. Everything I began to share with the world was created with one person in mind at a time, and this book was written in the same way.

It is my hope that with the words and art you find on these pages, you feel spoken to and you feel heard. I hope you are able to walk away from this book seeing a flicker of Light at midnight reminding you that all along you were blooming. In a world that often seems too crowded or busy to notice beautiful things or make meaningful connections, there is still room for each of us to grow in the ways we were meant to. May each page remind you of this truth.





# FOR THE HEART

## WHAT YOU FEEL

Hold tight to hope,  
amidst all unanswered questions  
for even in uncertainty,  
there is strength to be found,  
and grace will still abound  
in what you do not understand.

Under blue skies,  
on cracked rocks,  
in dry heat,  
in desert land,  
grace is the hand that is never out of reach  
reminding you:  
you are not weak  
because you are lonely.

And even if you have heard the word *grace*  
over and over again  
and you think you already know what it means  
there is grace for that, too,  
humbly reminding you of its endlessness,  
and how much you need it  
when you are lost in the wilderness.

So do not be disheartened,  
when the landscape is working against you,  
and do not think that you have failed  
when you are not sure you'll make it through;  
for this glorious unmerited favor called grace

will meet you where you are,  
giving you peace amidst your restlessness,  
and safety from alarm.

There will be days when you do not feel  
fearless  
and you choose to get up  
and go out to sea anyway.

And my friend,  
let me tell you,  
that is what it means to be brave.  
It is that gentle shove toward the water  
that says “I will go,  
and I will go afraid.”

It is not a feeling.  
It is not a thought.  
It is that inward wind that pulls you out of sleep  
and says “I will go forth,  
with all I have now:  
a breath, a dozen steps,  
and a pocket full of fears,  
but no matter what tries to pull me back,  
I will find the strength to be here.”

LEAVE ROOM FOR BEAUTIFUL INTERRUPTION;  
LIGHT, UNEXPECTED,  
ARRIVING IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT.

FOR PERHAPS HERE IN THE DARKNESS,  
YOU WILL START TO SEE THE REALITY  
OF ALL THE WALLS  
YOU HAVE BUILT UP  
AROUND YOURSELF  
AND HOW  
THEY HAVE KEPT YOU  
FROM LIVING.

FOR WHEN YOU ARE BROKEN,  
IT MIGHT SEEM LIKE THE ONLY THING THERE IS TO DO  
IS TO HEAD OUT  
IN SEARCH OF THE LOVE OF ANOTHER,  
BUT WHAT IF,  
INSTEAD OF LOOKING ELSEWHERE,  
YOU LOOKED RIGHT HERE AT THE WALLS  
YOU HAVE BEEN HIDING BEHIND FOR TEARS.

FOR THE WALLS YOU BUILT  
TO PROTECT YOURSELF,  
GAVE YOU A NARROW VIEW OF THE WORLD.  
THEY STUNTED YOUR LIMBS,  
AND YOU STRUGGLED TO BREATHE.

SO MAYBE, NOW IS THE TIME  
TO ALLOW LIGHT'S INTERRUPTION  
POURING IN THROUGH THE CRACKS,  
REMINDING YOU OF MEANINGFUL LIFE, ON THE OTHER SIDE.

YOU WERE SEEKING SAFETY,  
BUT STAYING BEHIND THESE SELF-MADE WALLS  
HAS NEVER BEEN THE WAY.

YOU NEED SOMETHING MORE  
TO COMFORT YOU IN BROKENNESS  
WHEN THE PAIN IS TALL AROUND YOU,  
TO REMIND YOU THAT EVEN HERE,  
YOU ARE INFINITELY LOVED.

AND WHEN THESE WALLS COME DOWN,  
YOU WILL SEE A BROKEN,  
BEAUTIFUL WORLD AROUND YOU  
INVITING YOU TO STEP INTO  
A DAILY CHANCE  
TO LIVE BEYOND  
THE BARRIERS OF WHO YOU WERE.

For all those conversations  
that happened years ago,  
may you know this to be true:  
no matter how dark the night,  
in the morning, Light pours through,  
filling every corner of the room.

For shame has tried to tear  
at the very heart of you.  
It has sunk your mind  
in lying thoughts of  
*is this still worth living for?*

But even though  
these thoughts have found you in a weary place,  
they do not have the final word.  
They do not tell your story.

You are free  
to move around the room,  
to paint the walls a new color,  
and declare there is more to you.

I am not sure who  
has made you feel insignificant,  
but I can assure you  
no matter how you have been made to feel,  
your voice deserves to be heard.  
Your words are meant to be felt.  
And the life that comes out of you  
is unique to you and no one else.

You may not have the next few years figured out,  
and there are times when you want to speak up  
but you do not know how.  
But  
when the words do finally come  
and you find the courage to open up,  
your story will not be too much.

I hope you know it is okay to have moments when you do not know what to say. I hope you know in the arms of Love, you have nothing to be ashamed of, even when the questions you are asking have no easy answers. I hope you know you are heard, in the wildest, roaring waves. I hope you know it is okay to lean into the grace that reminds you things will come together in the way they were supposed to.



You were meant  
to give your all,  
and you were also meant

to be loved.

You were meant  
to have meaningful connection  
beyond what you feel  
you are worthy of.

So have faith that unmerited favor  
has been made available to you,  
no matter the heartaches  
broken friendships  
have brought you.

You are free to forgive  
and you are also free  
to heal.

You are worthy of love  
no matter how anyone else  
has made you feel.

Never let anyone who cannot bear your pain make you feel you are unbearable. Not everyone is capable of walking with you, but that does not mean you are not worthy of belonging.

I promise you, there will be other people. There will be other people who are willing to take the time for you. And not because they pity you, but because they believe in the kind of Love that is true. The kind of Love that is not envious. The kind of Love that is not proud. I know you have been let down, but please don't give up on True Love now. It is kind and it is real, no matter how you have been made to feel. Don't give up on Love. Love has not given up on you.

If ever you start to feel weary  
of the mundane  
and completely restless  
in all that has not changed,  
and rather numb  
to the mention of *grace*,  
let today be the day  
you make the mindful decision  
to find joy in the ordinary places—

the white light between the bedroom blinds,  
the taste of rich, dark coffee grinds—

for even though the extraordinary calls you,  
and you feel its river running wild through your bones,  
and your heart is craving meaning and purpose  
on the other side of your unknowns,  
there are still these flickers of light and familiar tastes  
that are calling your heart to know:  
even when you are still,  
there are so many ways  
to find your way  
to gratitude.

when you start to feel  
the pull of the past,

and you are helpless  
trying to calm  
unyielding storms



on your own,

remember

to do the best you can do

while knowing and trusting:

it is not all up to you.

for it is okay,

more than okay

to cast down your burdens

and choose to believe

in healing.

AND SHE KNOWS IN HER SOUL  
WHEN IT COMES TO HER WORTH.  
IT DOES NOT MAKE HER WEAK  
FOR NEEDING TO BE REMINDED OF THIS TRUTH:  
THIS IS ALL A PART OF BEING GUIDED  
RIGHT WHERE SHE NEEDS TO BE,  
BEING LIFTED TO THE LIGHT  
THAT HER HEART FOREVER NEEDS.

YOUR STORY IS NOT JUST A SHALLOW POOL  
COLLECTING A LITTLE RAIN HERE AND THERE  
FROM WAHT MAYBE-COULD'VE-SHOULD'VE BEEN.  
YOUR STORY IS A SEA, WEIGHTED WITH MYSTERY,  
AND WAVE AFTER WAVE IT REVEALS MORE AND MORE,  
NO MATTER THE OPPORTUNITIES YOU MISSED  
OR LEFT BEHIND ON THE SHORE.

YOUR STORY HAS EVERY OUNCE OF WATER IT NEEDS.  
IT IS NOT MISSING ANY LONG-GONE THING.  
ALL BY GRACE, IT IS STILL BEING WRITTEN,  
IN THE WAY IT WAS MEANT TO BE.

MAY THIS SEASON OF WAITING  
BEND YOUR HEART TOWARD ADVENTURE—  
AN UNEXPECTED INVITATION  
TO JOURNEY  
THROUGH THE WILD OF WHERE YOU ARE.  
FOR MAYBE, JUST MAYBE  
YOU DO NOT HAVE TO GO  
VERY FAR  
TO ENCOUNTER SOMETHING MEANINGFUL  
THAT WILL MAKE THE WAIT WORTHWHILE.

And how did it feel this morning, still waiting for answers for your pain?  
Dawn was breaking through, yet no relief, and the sun was only a reminder  
of time passing by.

You did not wonder *where* you go from here.  
You wondered *if* you could go from here,  
and as you struggled to take that breath,  
you wondered if this is hopelessness.

How did it feel?  
How did it feel?

It is okay if there were no words for it,  
for language can never possibly hold

this fear, so dark and cold.

And maybe tomorrow  
when you look back,  
you will find the strength  
to tell that story.

But until then, it is okay to be confused. In this stillness, trust that morning still overcomes darkness, and there is a miraculous place you have been invited to. Breathe through.

I feel the gaze of the photograph  
peering at me  
from the wooden frame  
speckled in dust,  
but I have to remember:  
I am not who I was back then.  
Yes, that is my grin, my skin,  
but when I look into my own eyes,  
I know that I have changed.  
I know that even though I still feel traces  
of my former self,  
I see things differently now.  
I have learned not to hide my pain  
for fear of what others might say.  
I have learned some days will be harder than others,  
and that is absolutely okay.  
I do not have to be strong all the time.  
I am not a burden because I have burdens,  
and because there is a lot on my mind.

And maybe not everyone will have time for me,  
and maybe there will be people who feel I am too much,  
but I have learned that I am still worthy of Love,  
and that is more than enough.  
And I may not always feel weightless.  
I may forget at times that I am free,  
but I am learning to fall into grace,  
to be led where I am meant to be.

IT IS EASY TO FIX YOUR MIND  
ON WHAT FELL APART LAST YEAR,  
BUT IN THAT RAW REFLECTION,  
BE *gentle* WITH YOUR STORY,  
KNOWING THAT THROUGH EVERYTHING  
THAT DID OR DID NOT HAPPEN,  
THE PIECES WILL STILL COME TOGETHER  
AND YOU WILL LOOK BACK AND SEE,  
AFTER EVERYTHING,  
YOU NOW HAVE *strength*  
TO CARRY ON.

IF EVER  
YOU START TO FEEL  
YOU MUST HOLD THINGS IN,  
LET THEM BE  
LIFE-GIVING THINGS  
THAT REMIND YOU  
OF WHO YOU ARE  
AND WHO YOU

## ARE MEANT TO BE.

Even though  
you have learned  
the skill of  
running on empty,  
now is the time  
to learn the art  
of breathing deep  
all over again,  
letting no one make you feel  
that you cannot show up with the truth  
of where you are.

And some may not be ready for your honesty,  
but those people are likely equally dissatisfied,  
as they have not found the Harvest yet.  
So do not be discouraged.  
This is no reflection of you.  
You are still free to live  
your honest story  
in the way  
it was meant to be written.

You have picked petals  
without regard for their stems,  
leaving them stripped  
of their color,  
and when you saw what you had done,  
you ran

and ran  
and ran  
eastbound  
through the deserts  
to hide,  
never to return to flowers again.

A new day is calling you  
to stumble into the sunlight,  
where old ways  
of thinking  
are made right  
so you can be at peace,  
to roam through flowery fields again.  
For mercy is always  
louder than sharp cries of shame.  
It knows where you have been,  
but still calls you by your name,  
inviting you to step forward with the boldness to begin  
a way of living that gives freedom  
and to sow new seeds  
into the earth again.

It is okay to long for days past. It is natural to feel the imprint of what was, for all you lost is still a part of you. These memories carve their way into your heart, and you do not know how to recover its original form. And even when you try, you cannot shake the old feelings, her words, those photographs . . . but now, even here, after all of these years, you are free to remember, while also moving onward on this path, filled with Light, even if your earliest steps are small.

PERHAPS THE TEARS  
THAT WELLED IN YOUR EYES TODAY  
WERE A WAY  
OF LETTING IT ALL GO,  
A WAY OF RELEASING  
WHAT KEPT YOU  
FROM FLYING  
ABOVE THE HILLS  
THAT ONCE HELD YOU BACK.

It wasn't until she reached the shore  
that she realized  
she was meant for water.

She no longer yearned  
to linger on the lawn  
where she had been rejected.

She had reached her end,  
and it was there she learned to see,  
this was not the end at all.  
This was the beginning.

And it would be here,  
as the waves rushed in,  
she would hear  
the sea calling.

She is starting again.  
She is coming out to sea to be  
a soul

set free  
from who she was back then.  
And she will go forth in deeper waters,  
with hope as the anchor for her soul,  
reminding her that it was never other people  
that made her feel truly whole,  
and all along,  
she was called to more,  
a glorious life beyond the shore.

SHE NO LONGER HAD THE DESIRE  
TO BEND HERSELF INTO  
THE FRAME OF PHOTOGRAPHS  
WHERE SHE WAS UNWELCOME

Ask yourself  
the kinds of questions  
that go beyond today's desires,  
and dig deeper into the well  
of what  
you need.

What feelings  
do you need to acknowledge?  
What fears  
have you tucked away?  
What things  
have you worked so hard for  
that have yet to see  
the light of day?



What great offering  
would you bring the world,  
if you had to do it anonymously?  
What would you tell your younger self,  
to encourage her  
to live courageously?

IF YOU HAVE SECRETLY LONGED  
FOR SIGNIFICANCE,  
THE JOURNEY DOES NOT BEGIN  
OUT THERE IN THE WORLD,  
BUT DEEP WITHIN,  
WHERE YOU EMBRACE  
YOUR HONEST SELF.

SO LAY DOWN YOUR WORRY.  
LET YOUR HEART BE SEEN.  
LET THE OPENNESS REVEAL TO YOU  
THE DEEPER LOVE YOU REALLY NEED.

TRUE CONTENTMENT COMES LIKE  
UNEXPECTED RAIN, SOAKING INTO  
THE SOIL OF THE EARTH'S DRY FLOOR,  
REMINING YOU THAT PERHAPS THERE  
IS HOPE FOR THE SEEDS YOU HAVE SOWN.

All she wanted was love—  
an adventure with someone

she could count on.  
She closed her eyes,  
prayed,  
took the leap,  
and let him in.  
It was love.  
She thought it was love.  
He said it was love.  
Is this love?

And though there were wonderful moments,  
there were always these lingering thoughts . . .  
*yes, today was good,*  
*but what about tomorrow?*  
*Where does this lead?*  
*A year from now,*  
*where will we be?*

Layer by layer,  
things fell apart before her eyes.  
He was living for a moment,  
while she was hoping for the future.  
She was pushed out of his world  
and on her own,  
trying to gather the pieces of her heart,  
and find her way home.

The road back was long.  
And it was strange  
to go from being in step  
with someone,  
to journeying on  
to the rhythm of her own two feet.

She was walking home  
in pieces,  
but she realized even though  
she was broken, she was still walking home.  
She was still headed where she needed to be.

And even though at times  
she was certain  
he was the worst mistake of her life,  
she had gratitude  
that after everything,  
she had made it out alive.  
And now the challenge was  
to make it back home.

Having learned and having lived,  
she would know Love again,  
a deeper, Greater Love that would sustain her broken heart.  
Through all that changed  
and fell apart before her eyes,  
that was the greatest thing  
she could have ever learned from this.

DO NOT BE DISMAYED  
IF YOU HAVE A BROKEN HEART.  
YOU HAVE BEEN PLACED  
ON A JOURNEY OF HEALING  
WHERE LIGHT SHINES  
ON WHAT YOU ARE FEELING:  
AN INVITATION TO BELIEVE  
IN THE WORST OF THINGS,  
THAT CHANGE IS HAPPENING WITHIN YOU

FOR THE BETTER, FOR THE GOOD.

On this road of longing  
may you find Belonging  
in the arms of grace  
and never be the same;  
for it is here  
you will find  
you will be Loved as you are,  
you will be Seen as you are,  
and you will not be left as you are,  
for you have been invited  
to go  
on this journey of being shaped  
into who you were meant to be:  
an original work of art.

Through all you are feeling,  
and all your inner-longing,  
may your soul find comfort  
and peace  
in Belonging.

Continue to give with good intentions. Love is a good thing, and it is meant  
to be given. Take a deep breath. The why of your love is what matters.

Perhaps  
the vertical  
stone

structures  
stacked  
high  
between  
you  
and others  
are not as high and wide as they seem to be,  
and they need not keep you  
from experiencing  
this blessed thing called love.

You may have ideas about how others  
see you,  
but you are not defined  
by their perceptions.  
You are not an object  
under someone else's magnifying glass,  
whose only purpose  
is to be observed.

You are a living, breathing human being  
with a beautiful soul  
that is on a hope-anchored journey  
of learning what it means to be whole.

The sight of old photographs  
sends a sharp pain up your spine.

The days are not going to look the same  
from this day forward,

but you will  
move forward,  
for through all  
you have endured,  
you have blossomed.  
Which was possible  
only by the rain.

And perhaps  
this is your becoming,  
your unfolding  
into a grace-filled bloom.

No matter  
where the journey takes you,  
Light will lead you through.

Let this be  
your morning song,  
for it is far too easy  
to feel alone out here,  
in crowded subways  
and highways  
and trafficked walkways.  
They all have a way  
of reminding you  
of everyone who has moved on  
so quickly without you.

But no matter who stays  
or who walked away,  
remember all the things

they taught you.  
Remember  
the paths  
and the tunnels  
you have traveled through.  
You learned to see shapes  
within the shadows.  
You learned to find  
the window  
and wait for the birds  
of the new day to sing,  
to remind you  
of all that is changing.

YOU FEEL THE SEAR OF WOUNDS.  
YOU FEEL THE SEAR OF WOUNDS STILL OPEN.  
BUT THE SKY IS OPEN.  
AND THE SUN WILL POUR THROUGH  
THE RAIN AND THE CLOUDS AND THE FOG.  
LIGHT WILL FIND THE WAY TO YOU.  
HEAL.  
LET GO.  
AND TRAVEL ON.

Sometimes love  
is just learning how to stay.  
It's not always a grand gesture,  
but an inward posture.  
And sometimes,  
love isn't seen

or appreciated  
in the way  
you want.  
But maybe,  
maybe love goes deeper than  
what you can see,  
and it rattles the soul.

Love is as vast as the ocean,  
and we're always only swimming  
on the surface of its greatness.  
And we may not see  
how far our love goes or who it will reach,  
but we can always choose to trust.  
We need love,  
even when we do not know  
where the love we are giving  
will be received.

Go in search of more.  
When you are unraveling  
into severed threads,  
new stories are waiting  
to be woven,  
and you can hope for new beginnings.

This does not mean your journey  
will be easy,  
but moving forward is an act of faith,  
step by step,  
even when you cannot imagine



the tapestry on the other side of this.

And no one can take your faith away.

Remember

the heartbreak you saw before your eyes,  
the way you felt in the hospital that night,  
and that gentle whisper in the soul that you were going to be alright.

Because in your tears and speechless moments  
and the times you did not know what to do,  
new Life was a path laid out before you,  
inviting you to come forth.

Even though you did not know where the path would go.  
Even though you did not know where tomorrow would lead.  
You were headed in the direction of where you were meant to be.  
Above every worry, every doubt, and everything that fell apart,  
you were being held together,  
making room for an all new start.

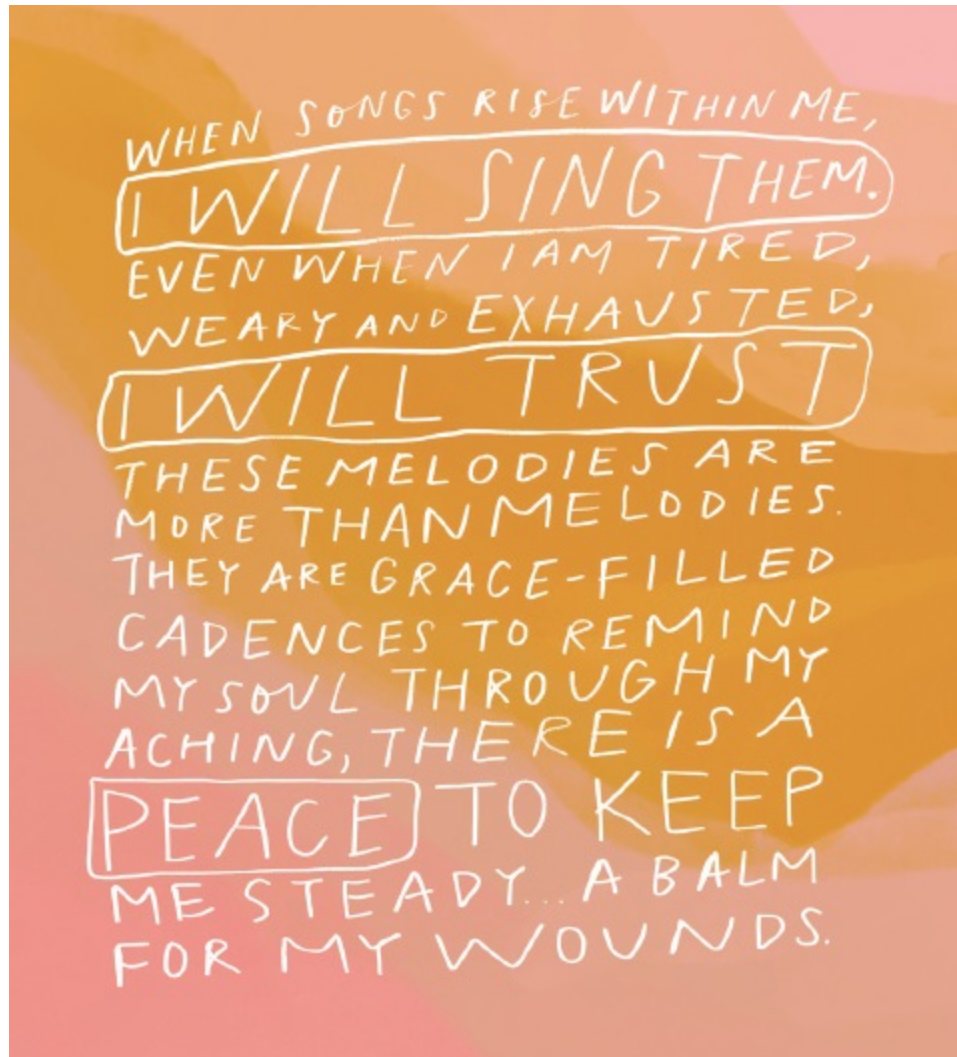
And although you came undone,  
you now see how far you've come,  
and how each day,  
each day,  
mercy awaits you in the morning.

For whatever pain  
lies beneath  
your blanket of sorrows,  
or the flaws

you have learned to conceal  
just to make it  
through the day,  
it is okay  
to grieve  
the loss of things  
that will never be  
the same again.

And this mind of yours  
that has pulled you  
back to  
the worst of things  
is the same mind  
that is capable  
of remembering  
the better things:  
the sound of green leaves in the spring,  
the sight of rain running along the street,  
the way laughter can rattle a room.  
Years later those senses still find you . . .

They are more than memories.  
They are woven  
in the layers of your heart,  
not hidden  
by a blanket of sorrows,  
never replaced,  
never torn apart.



Maybe on the other side of this,  
there will be a row of city lights.  
Maybe just maybe,  
they will light up the sky  
and remind us  
the world is filled with life.  
We have lost more than we could ever imagine,  
but now we carry with us  
a hope that shines  
as bright

as a summer meteor shower,  
and love that holds  
as steady  
as the ground beneath our feet,  
and the more we climb  
we are beginning to find  
just how valuable  
life is.

Never carry on  
sealed off from life.  
Even though  
it's difficult to bear,  
you are still worthy  
of healing and care  
and the freedom and peace to move on.

There will be more people,  
more places,  
peace  
beyond understanding.

So hold on to that.  
This is how you will be able  
to begin to walk on the path,  
even if you are still waiting  
for answers, closure, clarity.

Even when you cannot discern the terrain  
before you take the next step,  
now is still the time to go forth,  
with an open heart,

knowing that what you have walked through  
is valid,  
and the experiences  
you gather  
will be entirely valid too.

CHOOSING TO HAVE JOY  
IS NOT NAIVELY THINKING  
EVERYTHING  
WILL BE EASY.  
IT IS COURAGEOUSLY  
BELIEVING  
THAT THERE IS  
STILL HOPE,  
EVEN WHEN  
THINGS GET HARD.

She is learning to be okay in the mess,  
to breathe deep  
despite the chaos,  
declaring that it will not  
overcome her.  
For oh,  
things have been so heavy lately,  
but it has certainly  
not defined her.



EVEN WHILE YOU WAIT,  
YOUR LIFE  
IS TAKING SHAPE,  
LIKE CLAY  
IN THE HANDS  
OF THE POTTER.  
THERE IS NO NEED  
TO BE AFRAID,  
FOR WHATEVER  
IS BEING SCULPTED  
IS WORTHY  
AT EVERY STAGE  
OF BEING LOVED  
AND HELD WITH CARE  
FOR EXACTLY  
WHAT IT IS.





# FOR THE MIND

## WHAT YOU THINK

With Light silhouetting my shoulders,  
I will push into the dark night,  
no longer bound by shadows  
that trailed so long behind me.

For they do not tell my story.  
They do not hold my truth.  
They cannot keep me  
from the things  
I am meant to do.

Even if my eyes are heavy,  
I will push forward with audacity,  
and I will rise with strength at dawn.

And when I arrive there, I will smile.  
And not the kind of smile  
made of gritted teeth,  
but the kind that is involuntary and free,  
knowing I have made it through to liberty.  
For I have known darkness,  
and I am learning to be less afraid of it.

If you are swimming in a sea  
of unanswered questions,  
may you find courage to be silent.  
And while the waves

fall over one another  
in a splash of black and blue,  
slowly drowning out your thoughts  
leaving you with nothing else to do  
but fall helplessly  
under the body  
of rolling water,

do not think you must rush on.  
It is okay to spend some time here.  
It is okay to be the only one here.  
The shore is calling, but today, you're in this water.  
Find its purpose,  
its substance.

Wait in silence.  
Fall into a place of listening  
and surrender,  
and trust that even here,  
these whirling waters  
will not carry you on forever.  
And when the current comes  
you will be lifted up,  
carried to the shore,  
and you will be better  
for having been here,  
embracing silence amidst  
the water's roar.

I hope someday  
you know the taste  
of early morning mountain air,

and the saltwater waves of the ocean,  
and the unexpected bliss of some strange sweet-bitter fruit.  
But I hope you also know the taste of hope  
on an ordinary Tuesday,  
when you do not feel okay,  
and you rise up anyway.

Do more  
than just visit the world;  
belt to the heavens,  
listen to the languages of every passerby,  
in every single moment  
go joy-hunting today.

Despite the pale gray on your horizon,  
the gloom of a winter weekday's dawn,

even as you imagine the photographs of a life that could have been,  
all the places your mind has wandered  
and the stories you had hoped  
would end a little differently,

you are still not as lost as you think you are,  
you are here, for a reason, to make the most of it.

Listen out for the low-pitched song of the bluebird,  
the rustling leaves,  
the sound of rain.

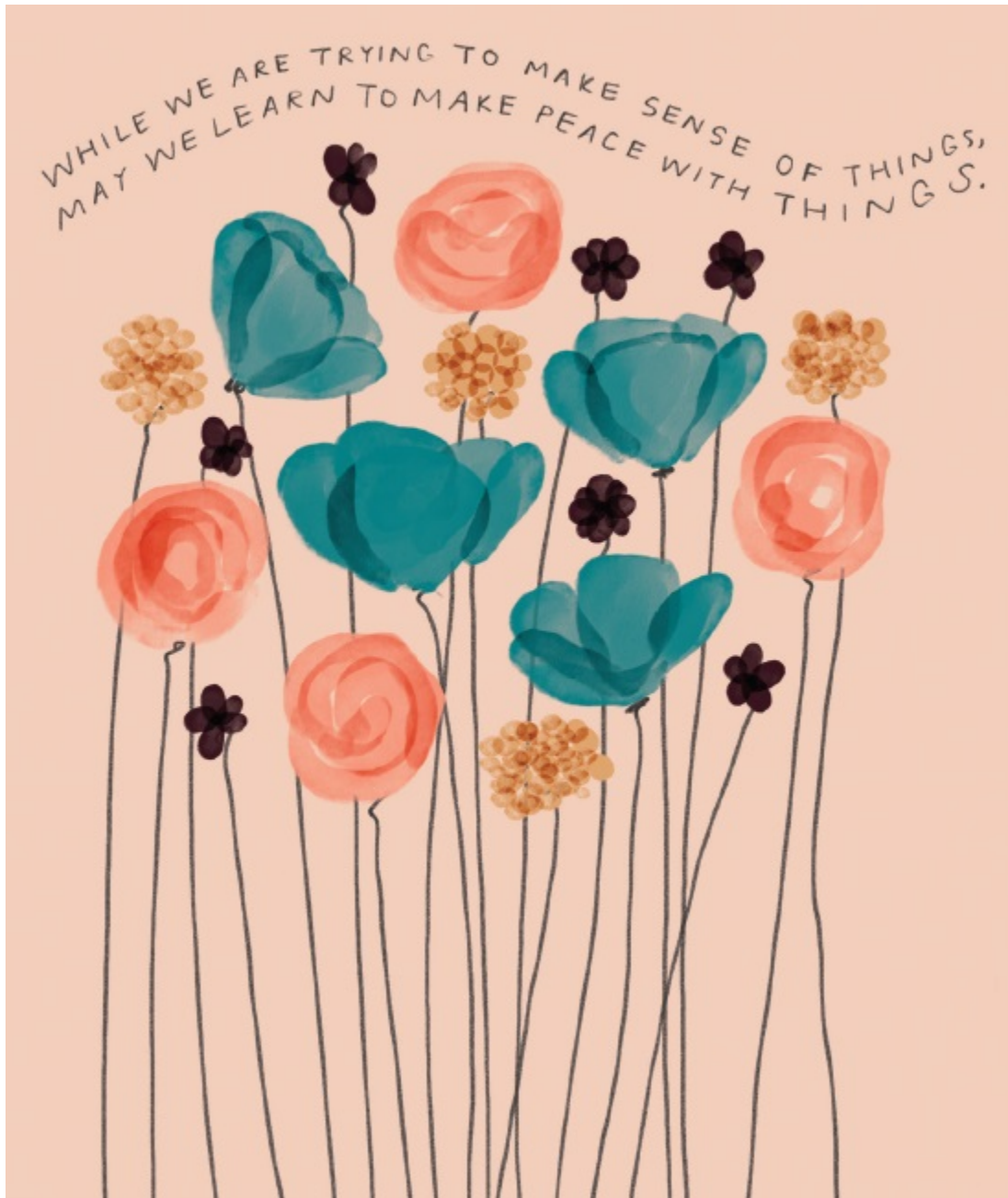
Listen for any little reminder of Life,  
feel it call you by your name.  
Consider the small and nearly missed,  
consider the bold, unanimously grand,  
consider it all something  
worth tasting and cherishing,

making the most of your days at hand.

Consider it a natural thing  
if this way of living  
takes some patterning  
and getting used to,  
for this is an unfolding  
of a novel-length awakening  
of seeing what has always  
been calling you.

finest moments  
between breaths  
between midnight and mornings,  
when no one is speaking  
and no one is singing  
but God-Sent-Love is breathing.





You find yourself  
beneath a canopy of trees  
with broken branches,  
covered with moss tangled at your knees.

Rest assured  
the forest does not crawl on forever.

But you must begin the journey  
here.

For this is the time,  
this is the time to come alive,  
to walk tall with a beating heart  
and wide-open midday eyes,  
to surrender,  
here in the green,  
for you are still free  
to travel free,  
without knowing  
everything,  
humbly following the traces of daylight,  
even though the path is unmarked,  
even though this was not a favored start,  
this is your only Hope  
to make it through  
precisely here,  
pushing through the land of the unknown  
you will find your home  
in Hope.

So for now,  
while you are here,  
turn your attention  
to the lessons of strength  
this present forest offers.

I CANNOT TELL YOU  
THE COLOR OF TOMORROW'S SUNRISE  
OR WHAT HUES WILL BURN  
LIKE LEAVES BEFORE YOUR EYES.  
I CANNOT TELL YOU  
WHICH PLANTS IN YOUR GARDEN  
WILL BLOOM BEFORE OTHERS  
OR WHICH ONES YOU WILL HAVE TO PRUNE  
AND WAIT FOR A SEASON LONGER,  
BUT I CAN TELL YOU,  
TOMORROW IS ON ITS WAY.  
YOU WILL STEP INTO AN ALL-NEW DAY,  
AWAKE.

Shadows  
fall like midnight  
on your shoulders,  
but those shadows will have no grip on you  
for they are doomed  
to be drowned out by Light.

And you might feel their heaviness  
weighing down on your knees,  
making it harder  
to walk,  
to breathe,  
but you will be alright,  
for you still are learning  
what it means to be strong.

You are still a capable, thriving being,



at a slower, shadow-lined pace.

You might feel  
overwhelmed  
beneath  
this canopy  
of endless trees,  
but if you choose to keep going,  
you will soon find the clearing,  
an open field  
with room  
to rest  
before you rise and begin again.

For even though  
restless questions  
crowd your midnight-wondering,  
every breath  
is a step  
in the direction of morning.

Let go  
to grab hold  
of tomorrow's possibility,  
and try again,  
try again.

SO WHEN YOU  
ASK HOW I'VE BEEN,  
I WRAP MY WORDS

IN TODAY'S BEAUTIFUL TRUTH  
THAT I AM NOT  
WHO I WAS  
BACK THEN.  
I WILL NOT JUSTIFY  
THIS SELF-EVIDENT REALITY  
THAT GRACE  
HAS CHANGED  
MY VIEW.

Here's to more vivid dreams,  
when-you-are-sleeping dreams and  
wide-awake middle-of-the-day dreams  
that make your heart fall in love  
in an instant.

Because lately, these hills you have been climbing  
have woven weariness into your bones,  
driving you further and further from home,  
and as much as you want to believe  
the terrain will even itself out,  
you have persisting doubts  
and gray scale fears  
that the road signs  
will be obstructed  
by the rain  
and you will be stuck here,  
  
estranged in an unknown place.

So when you are struggling to keep climbing,

and the wind has blown you to your knees,  
and any hope you had  
fell through the cracks  
of the earth,  
dream  
of the tree-lined clearing up ahead  
you have yet to see.

Have the audacity  
to keep dreaming  
in full color, come undone,  
letting hope have its way.

And whenever  
she starts to forget  
the story of her original bloom,  
the flowers of this green earth remind her  
she too will spring up from the ground  
again.  
Gravity will not restrain her,  
for the sun and rainfall  
will propel her  
up  
from gritty soil  
into open morning air,  
and Light will meet her there  
and she will  
begin  
to unfold  
in the way  
she is meant to.

When it's 2 a.m.  
and the room  
is lined  
with shadows,  
turn your eyes  
toward the window—  
to the little light burn of  
the street lamp  
the white star  
the flickering red light of the airplane passing by . . .  
breathe deep, breathe deep,  
it is okay  
to feel a little out of place  
in this dark and restless space  
and come falling,  
falling  
into grace.

And know this is still true:  
*Lo, I am  
with you  
until the end of end of earth,  
even at restless 2 a.m. 's,  
even when it hurts.*

So turn on the music,  
open the book,  
you do not have to count the hours.  
You may have lost your share of sleep,  
but Light will never lose the glory,

and no matter how long these late nights last,  
the sun is on the way

with mercy in the morning.

I believe  
there is a time for everything under the sun.  
A time to live, a time to die,  
a time to rise, to dream, to become . . .  
to find room for me  
in the most crowded spaces of my mind,  
to see there is still time  
for me to slow down,  
process things,  
and let Ecclesiastes sing to me:

you may have come undone,  
but there is a time under the sun,  
for everything,  
absolutely everything.

You do not have to live afraid.  
You do not have to live in an overgrown garden  
of weeds  
that have no place.

Every fear you have known  
did not come here alone,  
it came with its own story  
welling up from the past.

Never let fear make a home in your garden.  
It is a weed,

but you are free to yank it up,  
you are free to speak with fire:  
“enough is enough.”

For this garden of your life  
is the place where flowers grow,  
and they are not only beautiful—  
they are powerful,  
releasing breath into the air around them.  
Pause  
and exhale.

PERHAPS THIS IS THE SEASON  
TO STEP FULLY INTO THE BEAUTIFUL REALITY  
OF WHAT IT MEANS TO BE FREE:  
BRAVE AND ADVENTUROUS  
AND READY FOR THE JOURNEY  
OF LEARNING AND GROWING.  
OF LIVING AND KNOWING  
YOU DO NOT HAVE TO HAVE EVERY ANSWER  
TO BREATHE DEEP AND KEEP GOING.



Remember this place  
in the years to come.  
Remember the streetlight,  
flickering and dim.  
And that silvery car

parked  
awaiting the traffic light,  
reflecting back the red hues  
so typical of  
that season of life.  
It will pass on,  
in time,  
it passes on.

Are they residents,  
or are they  
merely passing through?

Oh, these seemingly insignificant  
moments of light,  
I am still  
grateful for you.

Dive in  
beyond the reef.

And what will you call it?  
What will you name  
this grand adventure?

Will you call it  
“Into the deep,”  
“The day I finally learned to breathe,”  
“The strength I did not know I would need,”  
or will you simply call it  
“Be”?  
For after all,  
this is what



you are doing:  
discovering  
the courage  
living inside of you  
is not as distant  
as it seemed.

No matter how this season ends,  
you will walk away knowing  
what you did not know back then.  
This year will not end like last year,  
nor any other year before.



May you never forget all of the people you met

who planted seeds of hope  
in your life  
when you least expected it.  
May you never forget  
the garden  
that still bloomed  
even after your driest seasons.

No matter how big or small,  
these people and these places  
have been part of it all:  
season into season.

Together, you have watched dead things come to life,  
day by day, flower by flower.

Take a look around  
at what is still growing:  
    a tree outside your window  
    your collection of books  
    a friendship  
    hope

For by grace you will grow  
into who you were meant to be,  
and you will arrive,  
and thrive,  
in due season  
together.

At the right time,  
every broken thing

will come together for the good.  
You are more than your  
failures,  
successes,  
more than your fears.  
And far beyond the surface  
of your desires,  
there is a truer reason  
why you are still here.  
If you find yourself struggling  
to see past your imperfections  
because you cannot figure out how  
what's torn apart can come together,  
may you know in your soul  
that the answer is not found in thinking,  
feeling,  
doing,  
but in trusting in what is Greater than you.

# LITTLE REMINDERS FOR THE OVERTHINKER

WAITING DOESN'T  
ALWAYS MEAN  
WAITING AROUND.

YOU WON'T  
FIT IN  
EVERYWHERE.

YOUR  
STORY  
MATTERS  
TOO.

GIVE MORE  
THAN YOU  
RECEIVE.

BEING OVERLOOKED  
DOESN'T DIMINISH  
YOUR VALUE.

LOVE STILL  
EXISTS, AND  
IT STILL MATTERS.

FAITH IS BUILT IN  
THE UNKNOWN.  
YOU DON'T HAVE  
TO HAVE THE  
ANSWERS.

YOU HAVE A BIG  
IMAGINATION.  
USE IT FOR GOOD.  
USE IT FOR OTHERS.

TAKE THE  
SCENIC  
ROUTE.

THE BEST WAY TO  
"MAKE IT" IS MAKING  
THE MOST OF EVERY  
OPPORTUNITY  
PRESENTED TO YOU.

Some fears are like droughts  
that roll in over mountains  
stripping the earth  
of the lush green and soft soil  
that once promised  
fruitful life,  
sending your tired eyes searching  
for hope  
in what has become  
the most hopeless place.

But it is in these desperately barren landscapes  
you come to learn:  
this Glorious Living Water  
running wild through your veins  
is entirely  
unafraid  
of the dry, scorched place of your fears.

So take heart when fear is raging.  
Seek courage over control.  
Learn to let go into the wild of things,  
learn to grow as things unfold.

TAKE HEART,  
TAKE HEART,  
DO NOT BE AFRAID.  
THE FUTURE MAY BE UNCERTAIN,  
BUT THERE IS NO NEED  
TO HIDE AWAY.  
EVERY DAY IS AN OPPORTUNITY

TO COURAGEOUSLY SHOW UP,  
EVEN WHEN YOU DO NOT FEEL EQUIPPED,  
OR THAT YOU WILL BE ENOUGH.  
LET GRACE SURPRICE YOU,  
SETTING FIRE TO YOUR BONES,  
STRENGTHENING YOUR MIND  
IN THE WILD OF YOUR UNKNOWNNS.

Be at peace in the mystery.  
You can thrive in the mystery,  
feel free and safe in mystery,  
assured the ground beneath your feet  
is safe and ever sturdy.  
Not everything can be put into words.

A mystery-ridden life is still filled with Light,  
and it is okay  
to have days  
where you are still learning  
  
what that looks like.





Make a  
*practice*  
of resting.

There will be mountains,  
coastlines,  
and sunsets over power lines,  
and there will also be moments  
when you are lost in your room  
of journals  
filled with unanswered prayers  
and a wall of photographs  
that taunt you  
with cold, distant stares—

but slowly and surely,  
you find  
graceful strength  
to press into the moment  
and come alive within it,  
to turn to a blank page  
and start writing again,  
to remember the way you felt  
when those photographs  
were first taken,  
realizing that nothing  
stays the same,  
but even though  
things have changed,  
you can see old things as new  
in the most ordinary rooms.

Even the dull moments  
that make you long  
to be elsewhere,  
will prepare you



for where you want to be,  
and you will have gratitude  
when you arrive there.

Find the music  
in the noise around you,  
shuffling footsteps,  
distant chatter,  
the sound of doors  
swinging open and closed,  
the buzz of a phone,  
the occasional laughter . . .

You may not have chosen  
your surroundings,  
but you can choose  
to find life in them.

When that inner  
critical voice  
decides  
to speak,  
it must not  
lead the way.

It does not speak  
for how you have grown.

It does not speak  
for when you fell.

It does not speak  
for where you are going  
and the story  
your life tells.

Fall in love with the art of living.  
Fall in love with letting things be.  
Fall in love with listening.  
Be still in the sun,  
where the winds ever-gently blow,  
knowing it is here,  
in moments like this,  
you are living,  
and you will grow.

YOU ARE FREE  
TO LAY YOUR  
BURDENS DOWN,  
COMING ALIVE  
RIGHT HERE,  
RIGHT NOW.

MAY YOU CLING TO ENDLESS PEACE  
NO MATTER YOUR UNKNOWNNS.  
MAY IT BE A FEAST OF HOPE SET BEFORE YOU  
WHEN YOU FEEL THE MOST ALONE.

I do not know  
what has left you empty  
or made you feel  
like you could never be  
enough—

that your love

was not enough.

But I can promise you,  
as long as your heart is beating,  
you are meant to be  
on this earth, and you have more love to give,  
and there is more love  
to be given to you.

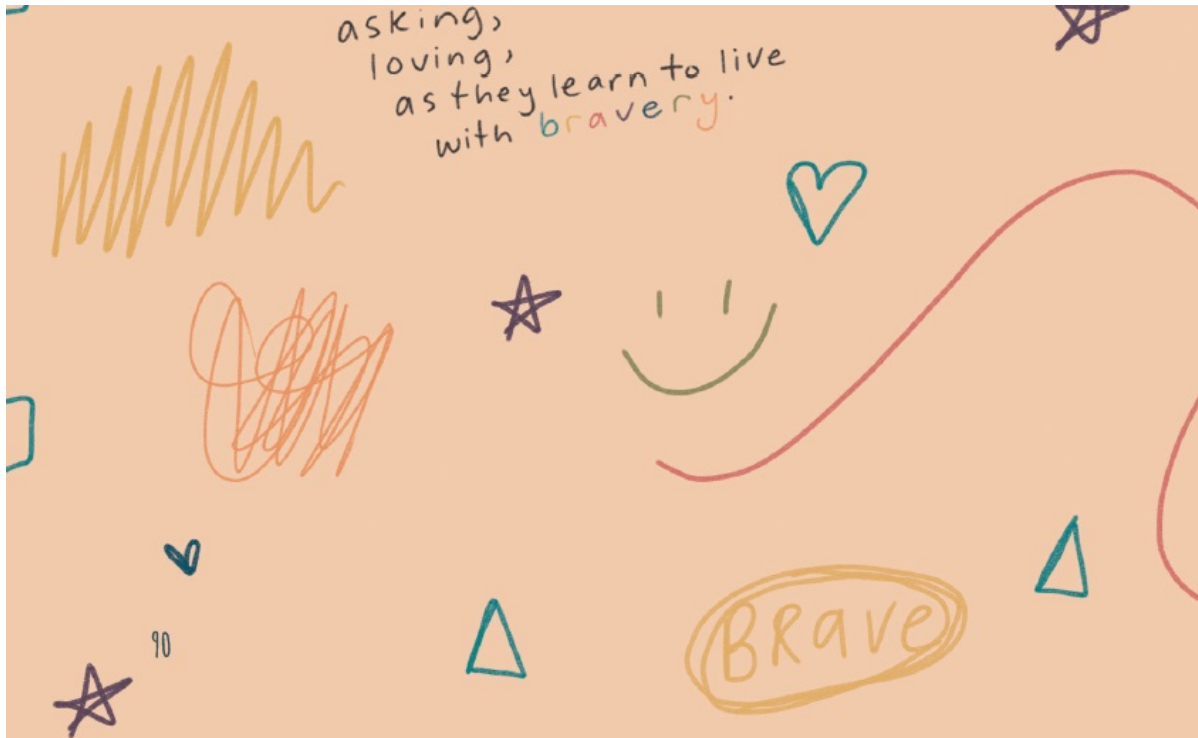
When you are exhausted  
trying to choose  
which door  
is best  
for you,  
and you fear  
that if you do not make the right choice  
at a wall of a hundred doors,  
slow down and remember,  
within the Light,  
you will not fail.

Once you begin to see  
how Light spills through  
no matter which door you choose,  
you will have confidence  
to meet any challenges that lie ahead.  
And even when your mind  
is filled with questions,  
your heart is filled with joy,  
you are learning to see  
that in every corner,  
on every wall,

there are lessons in them all  
and you are free  
to walk with confidence  
through whatever door  
before you  
that leads to new Life.

You have traveled so far,  
and you choose  
again  
today  
to walk in the Light.





This season  
she is learning the art  
of becoming,  
unashamedly  
stepping out  
from behind the iron gate  
she settled behind  
long ago.

She is stepping  
onto the cracked sidewalk  
overgrown with wild green,  
choosing to believe  
out here in the unfamiliar,  
in the open  
she is free

to explore,  
discover,  
uncover  
who she  
is meant to be.

You do not have to live afraid.  
You do not have to live  
with the lie  
that things will always be this way.

Today you can believe  
things will come together  
as they should,  
all by grace,  
for the better,  
for the good.



I want to plant  
bellflowers

in unexpected places.  
I want to know  
color  
after the rain,  
for I have endured too much pain.  
I have seen too many storms  
that were supposed to stay at sea.  
I never thought they would find me.

I found strength to breathe  
one breath  
at a time,  
so I could know  
true peace,  
a field in bloom  
in my crowded mind,  
and to believe  
even this  
would pass,  
and I would find rest  
and healing,  
at last.





# FOR THE BODY

## WHAT YOU DO

You might have a little fire in you,  
a little rain,  
a little thunder,  
a little wind in your sail too.

You might have  
a bit of your mother in you,  
your grandmother,  
her mother,  
a beautiful old soul  
you feel connected to.

And with all of these  
many parts,  
you were made to shine  
unapologetically bright,  
even when you do not know where to stand,  
even when the lighting is not right.

So don't let anyone tell you  
you have to have  
the way you are  
all sorted out  
before you walk through your cave of doubt  
into your life that is happening now.

And whether the way you come alive  
is through your words,  
your humor,

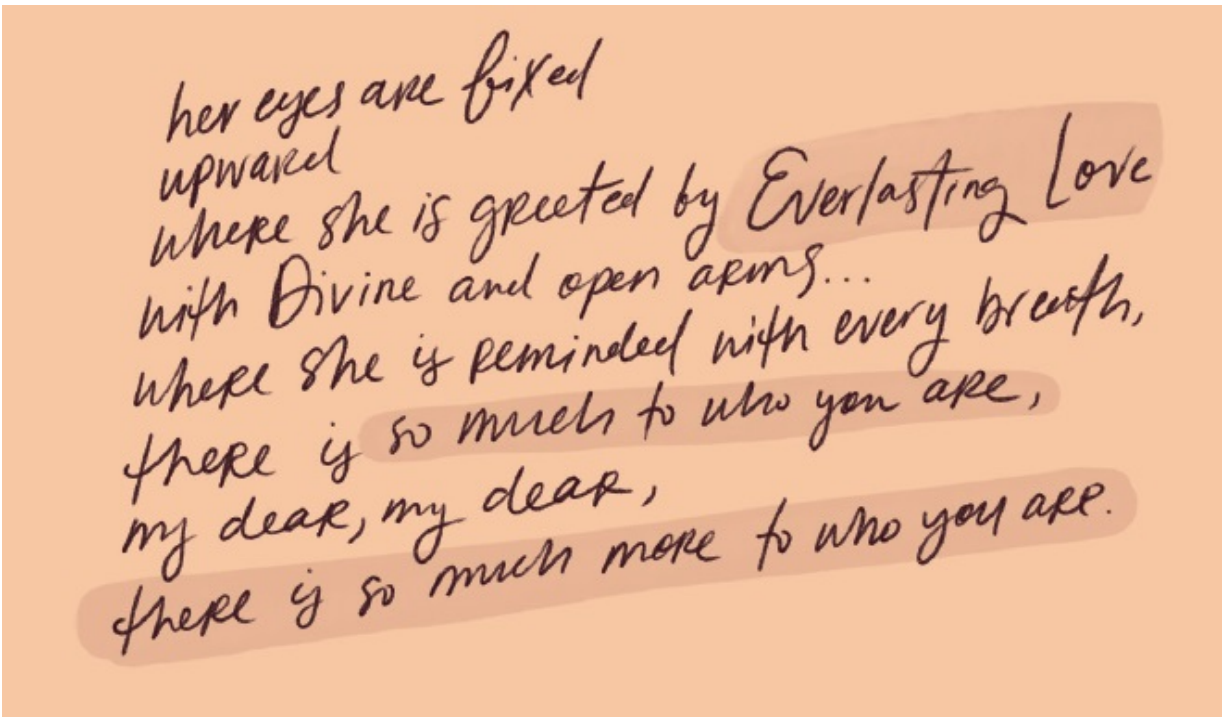
your tenderness,  
your song,  
now is the time to share  
what has been in you all along:  
a full-color soul  
lined with gold  
and a million stories  
that make you  
who you are.

Your small voice  
has a way  
of spilling into the rooms  
where you thought there would be  
no place for you.  
Even when it is only  
a word or two,  
your small voice  
has a way  
of pushing through.

And if you happen to be  
a little quieter,  
and you sound differently from others,  
the words you choose  
resound with truth  
all the same.

**EVEN WHEN THERE ARE A THOUSAND THINGS TO  
DO, CHERISH THESE UNRUSHED MOMENTS. MAKE**

ROOM IN YOUR HEART FOR THEM. THERE WILL BE  
MANY MOUNTAINS TO CLIMB, BUT ALWAYS MAKE  
TIME TO FIND THE PASTURES WHERE YOU CAN  
REST.



For all the times  
you had to bend and break  
and mold and shape  
to meet someone else's expectations of you,  
and for all the times you stood out

a little too much,  
you were a little too different  
or not different enough,  
and you felt the gaze of those  
who did not truly see you,

may you know this to be true:  
their perceptions of you  
may have crashed into your story,  
like a floodgate falling  
on your delicate heart,  
but the water will only flow so far,  
for their judgments do not hold enough weight  
to find their way  
beneath the surface  
and into your inner layers.

LET RHYTHM  
GET INTO YOUR BONES  
AS IF THIS IS THE LAST TIME  
ON EARTH  
YOU ARE GOING TO HEAR THIS SONG.  
OR GO AND SIT AGAINST THE WALL  
AND BE A WALLFLOWER IF YOU WANT TO,  
FOR TONIGHT MIGHT NOT BE THE END,  
BUT THEN AGAIN,  
WHAT IF IT IS?  
YOU WERE MADE FOR THIS MOMENT.  
GET BACK INTO YOUR SKIN.  
DANCE AND CHERISH EVERYTHING,  
AS IF YOU MIGHT NEVER HAVE  
THE CHANCE AGAIN.

Come, and be free.  
Go running into the clefts of the canyon

where the water pours.  
Come afraid,  
and come forth  
as you are,  
letting this rushing water remind you  
of the life rushing through your heart,  
life flowing through your body  
showing you what it needs  
is to know that being small in the canyon  
does not mean you are too small to be.

For out here, in the wild,  
you are agile  
walking through your own uncertainty.

And that,  
dear friend, takes bravery.

Put on your coat,  
your boots,  
your hat,  
and grab your umbrella.

Go down to the city center  
and wander into the cathedral.  
Go where the sun is gone from the sky,  
where your shadow climbs up the wall,  
and be reminded  
just how small,  
just how small  
you really are.

After all these years of going and going,  
there is room to rest for a little while  
in wonder  
of the  
majestic.

There is time to slow down  
and stare up  
at the blue, red, and hint of yellow  
of a twentieth-century stained glass window,  
a fading yet sacred art,  
a masterpiece,  
placed piece by piece  
to create the kind of history  
that comes to life beyond your eyes.

How do we know  
how we were meant to spend every second of our time?  
Were we really meant to rush with all abandon toward some earthly hilltop  
finish line?

Or was God  
telling us something  
in those whispers to “be still,”  
that all along,  
it was necessary,  
to slow down,  
trust,  
and heal.

Pause  
and be unapologetically at awe  
at this small piece of the world,

miraculously meaningful,  
that took your trembling hand  
and caught you by surprise.

When you get to go to that place  
where the water  
meets the mountain  
and the mountain  
meets the sky,  
and you do not know where  
to fix your eyes  
because all of it,  
absolutely all of it,  
is one shade of blue—  
this heavenly place—  
this flicker in your soul—

When you get to that place,  
go deeper into that blue.  
Turn your eyes to  
the water and the way  
it reflects the mountain

and how the mountain  
kneels to the sky  
and how that long cloud moves  
and that full-water ripples  
and how in the heaviest of winds  
you are still able to breathe,  
and be reminded  
you are living.

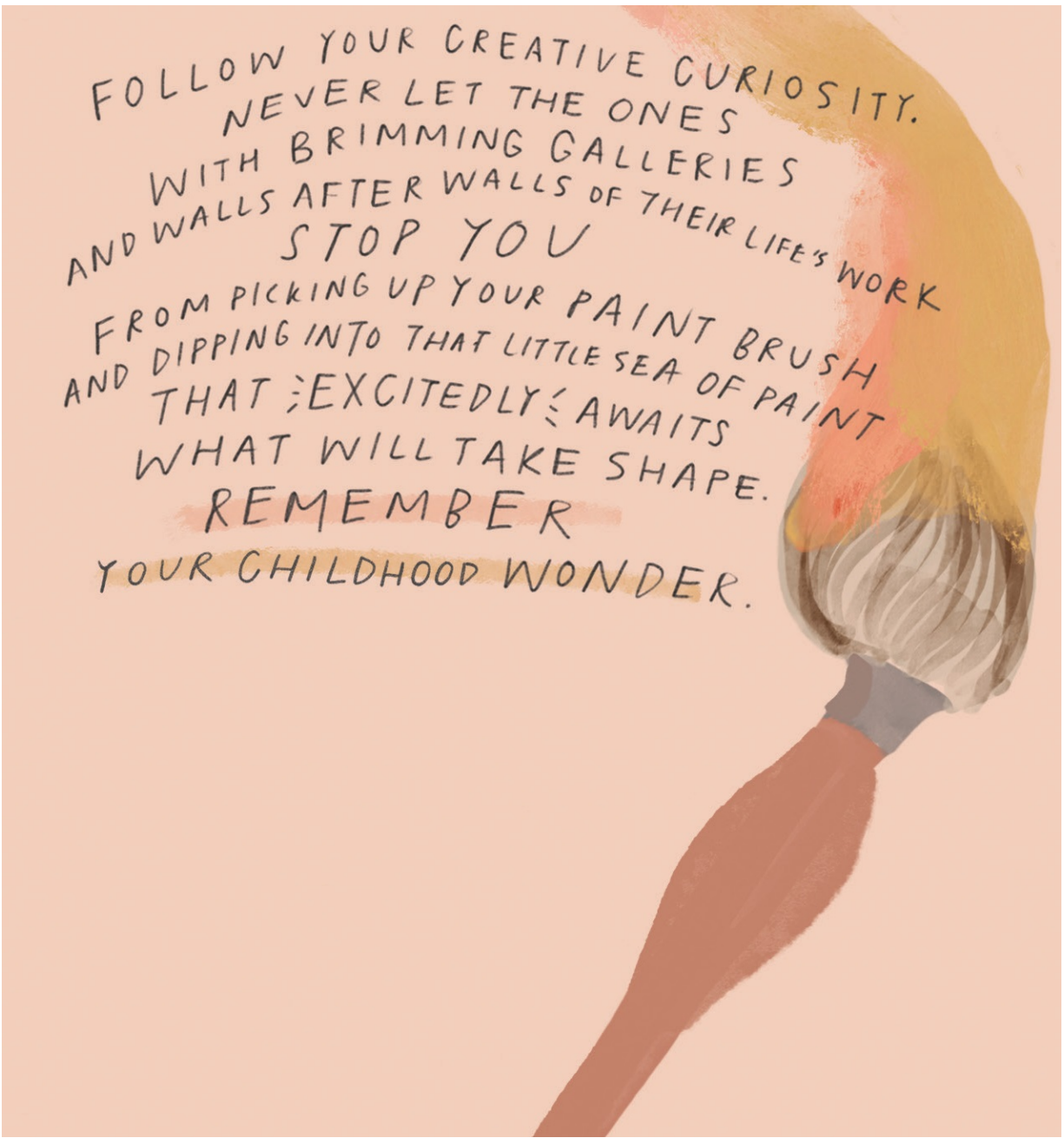


When you catch a glimpse of your reflection  
and all you can see are the very things you fear,  
do not be afraid, for light will meet you there.

And even though every flaw  
has been illuminated here,  
there is no reason to fear,  
for there is beauty to be seen  
amidst the scars that have marked you.

And whether they are easily seen  
or you are the only one who seems  
to notice they are there,  
you are free to cast away those anxious cares  
and fix your eyes on the wholeness  
light revealed.

And it will not be easy,  
facing the mirror each morning,  
but perhaps you can be patient with yourself,  
remembering that seeing the wholeness  
of these scars  
is a part  
of getting to know  
who you are.



May Love wash like water  
wild over me  
in the desert of my mind  
when I am tired,

thirsty, seeking.

That time of year  
when I am growing,  
when I am  
a year older,  
but not feeling  
stronger  
in my shoulders.

May Love remind me  
that growth  
is incremental.

I have been aching  
for the rush of fresh spring water.

It does not come,  
but I trust  
the water is not stagnant.

Even the softest, lightest rain  
can break the ground beneath my feet  
and fill the very roots of me  
with the tenderness I need.

If there is ever a day  
when you are overwhelmed  
by a crowd of expectations  
and you are not ready  
to throw yourself  
on the line  
in the way those above you  
seem to want you to,  
may you know this to be true:

you do not have to meet  
every gatekeeper's  
expectation of you  
in order to show up  
in a way that is true.

You do not have to  
hide away  
when the noise  
of expectation  
rings like an alarm  
in your ears  
drawing attention  
to your fears  
that maybe  
you don't belong here . . .  
When it's all too much,  
grace is more  
than enough  
holding you  
to remember  
what is true  
no matter what  
they are asking of you.

We learn of our freedom when we are out in the open field.  
We learn of our own growth with our feet planted in the grass,  
and in the sun.  
If we stand still enough,  
we can catch a hint of gentle blowing wind

teaching us  
again and again

seasons change, things happen,  
but for some reason  
we are here for every moment,  
we are alive in it all,  
and it all matters.

RATHER THAN WORRY  
ABOUT CREATING A LIFE THAT WAS IMPRESSIVE,  
SHE TURNED HER ATTENTION  
TO CREATING A LIFE THAT WAS BRAVE.  
SHE TURNED HER ATTENTION  
TO BEAUTY OVER PERFECTION,  
LOVE OVER COMPARISON,  
AND TELLING A STORY OF GRACE,  
INSPIRING OTHERS TO DO THE SAME.

Not everyone's strength looks the same.

Sometimes strength is grasping on to a jagged trail on the steep side of the mountain, with icy rain on your shoulders and wind on your back. Sometimes strength is continuing to push upward against the incline in pursuit of the highest peak. It's continuing the climb against heavy winds, as all of the traveled miles are wearing at your knees.

Sometimes strength is waking up and choosing to breathe another day.

Sometimes strength is getting out of bed.

Your “strong” might not look like her strong, and that is more than okay.  
You are not the same, so your strength will not look the same.

To breathe is brave.  
Never underestimate the power  
of an exhale.

There will be some nights  
where you will look up and lose track  
of all the stars you see,  
and there will be some nights  
you can't lift your head,  
but in both  
of those nights  
and every other  
night in between,  
you are strongest  
when you take  
the time to breathe.

It takes courage  
to live through heartbreak.  
Breathing is no small feat.



When you find yourself falling into the pit of anxiety, remember the ladder of hope that reminds you there is no reason to be afraid. There is still a way out of this, and you are still capable—not perfect, but capable—and you have permission to try to climb again. Even if your hands shake, and your knees are weaker from the fall, you can still trade your fears of tomorrow with hope for today: the courageous decision to climb on anyway out of the pit of anxious thoughts.

There is no reason to live afraid.



IT IS MORE THAN OKAY  
IF "GIVING YOUR ALL"  
MEANS STARTING SMALL  
AND TAKING IT DAY BY DAY.

EVERY BEAUTIFUL ROSE  
BEGINS  
AS A SEED  
AND IS MADE PRECISELY THIS WAY.

There will be times



when the last thing  
you want to do  
is hear  
that you have  
to keep going.  
The last thing  
you will want to do  
is feel  
you have to keep pushing.

Let the breaths  
leaving your body  
second by second  
remind you  
how seconds soon  
turn into minutes,  
and these minutes  
soon turn into hours  
and hours  
then turn into days  
and even though you once thought  
you were stagnant,  
you have made it  
a miraculously long way through the darkness.

And life will ask a lot of you,  
but it is worth it to go awake.  
Do not travel asleep.  
You will miss so many things.  
Keep your eyes open.  
Keep your heart open too.

There are so many things  
the journey will reveal to you.

Maybe someday  
I'll point my face  
right into the mirror  
and actually feel  
layer by layer,  
that I, too,  
am beautiful.

Maybe  
that day  
can be today.  
Maybe I can stop  
looking for symmetry  
and learn to  
embrace the blemishes;  
to accept me  
for me,  
without the pretense  
of who I thought  
I had to be.

Living in the moment  
is learning how to live  
between the big moments.  
It is learning how to make the most  
of the in-betweens  
and having the audacity

to make those moments  
just as exciting.

We think less of ourselves  
because it feels safe.  
If we don't build ourselves up,  
then we won't be disappointed  
when the sculpture  
comes crashing down.

Our worth  
is not delicate glass,  
it is made of hope,  
grace that lasts.  
Through the good, the bad,  
the I'm-afraids and I-don't-knows,  
our worth withstands fire,  
and we come forth as gold.

Take photographs of everything.  
You never know how long these moments will be here.  
Things are going to change.

I know it doesn't feel  
that way now,  
but they will.  
You are not  
going to be here forever.  
Time will run  
like wild winds

over the hills  
impossible to capture,  
and all you can do  
is slow your pace  
and hold  
whatever you can  
in your hands,  
for things will not always be  
the way they are.  
So take photographs of everything:  
ordinary things,  
simple things,  
between the door  
and by the window things.  
Light-ridden and shadow-heavy things.  
Forever things.  
Fleeting things.  
Take photographs of everything.

You catch a glimpse  
of beauty  
in your conversations with him.  
You will feel transported  
to some new place  
just by being around him.  
Some people  
create that spark.

I hope you know  
the same way you see him,  
you are entirely worthy  
of being seen that way too,

because there is Glorious Light  
inside of you,  
and this Light,

this Light is a gift,  
for you to receive,  
embody,  
and as a result,  
begin to share  
as Light  
in the world  
around you.



YOU ARE LOVED,  
EVEN IN SOLITUDE.

YOU CAN FEEL AT HOME  
IN THIS PRESENT MOMENT.  
YOUR WORRIES  
MAY BE OBSTACLES  
BUT THEY ARE NOT  
UNBREAKABLE WALLS.

AND WHEN SHE  
TOOK HER SEAT  
AT THE TABLE  
AND SHE DID NOT QUESTION  
IF SHE BELONGED,  
SHE FOUND  
SHE DID NOT HAVE TO BE  
ALL SHE THOUGHT SHE'D HAVE TO BE  
IN ORDER TO FEEL  
CONNECTED  
AND  
RECEIVE  
THE LOVE  
SHE TRULY NEEDS.

# DAILY



YOU ARE LOVED  
AND WORTHY  
OF LOVE



YOU ARE  
BEAUTIFUL  
INSIDE  
AND OUT



YOUR PRESENCE  
MATTERS



YOU CAN SLOW  
DOWN AND  
ENJOY THE  
MOMENT



YOU ARE GOOD AT  
LISTENING



YOU ARE  
FUN TO BE  
AROUND

# AFFIRMATIONS



YOU KNOW HOW  
TO GET THINGS DONE



YOU ARE WORTHY  
OF COMMUNITY



YOU ARE NOT  
ON THE  
OUTSIDE  
LOOKING IN



YOU ARE  
IN TOUCH  
WITH THE  
STORY BENEATH  
YOUR SKIN

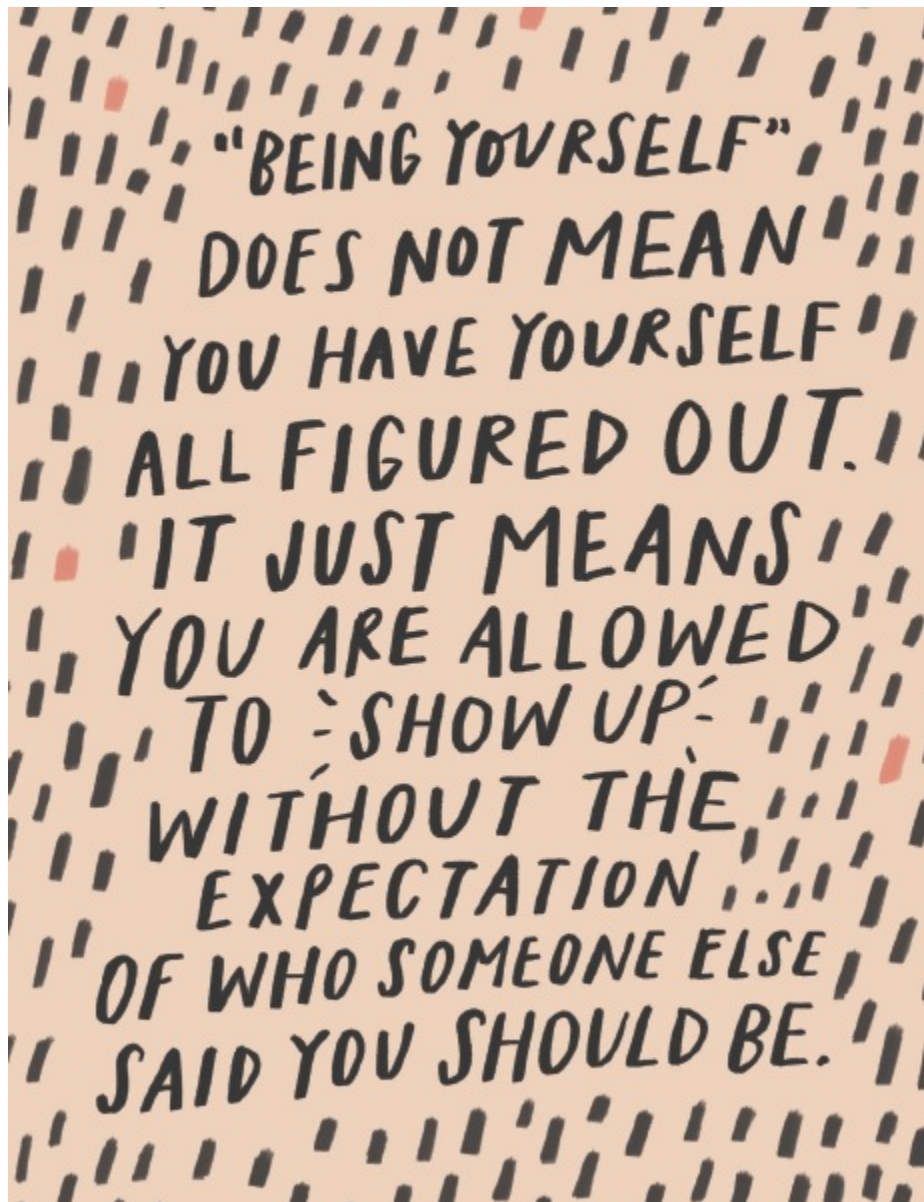


YOU ARE  
ENOUGH TO  
REACH YOUR  
FULL POTENTIAL



YOU ARE STRONGER  
THAN YOU THINK,  
AND YOU EMBRACE  
THIS WITH EACH  
BREATH YOU BREATHE





Dive into the present moment  
letting Light guide  
your way.

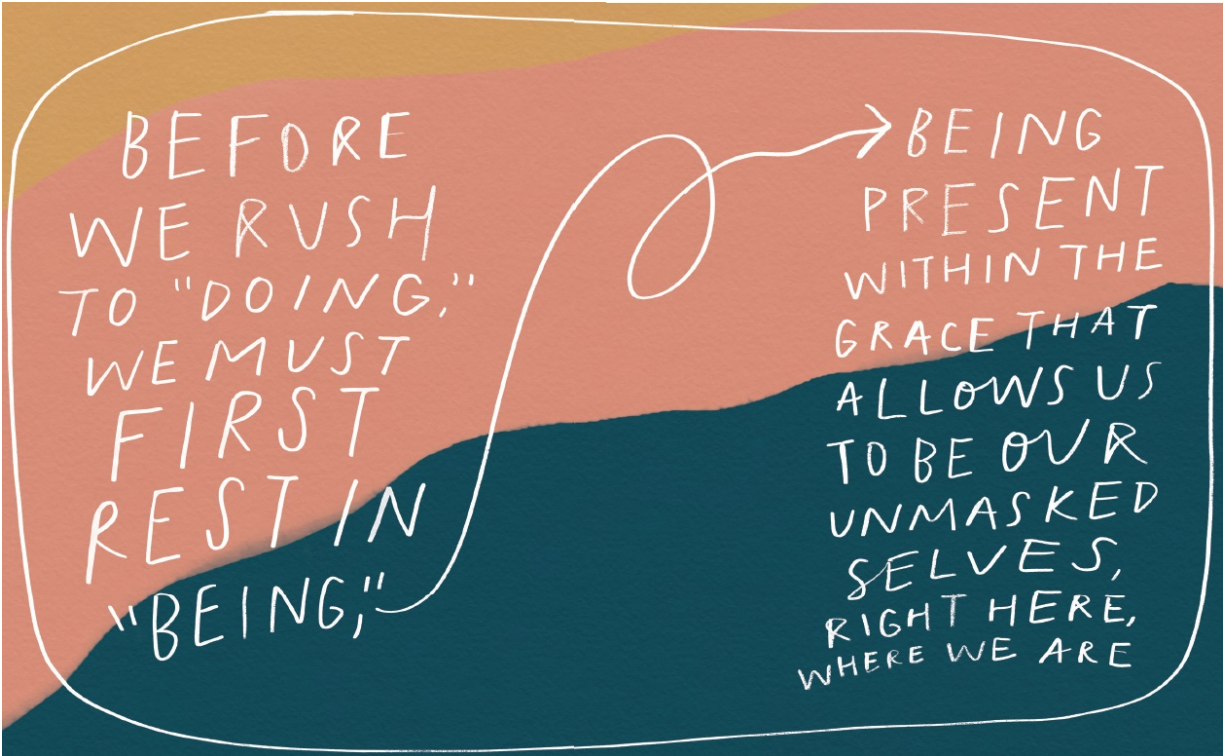
You will certainly  
face unknowns,  
but you will not

face them alone.

All around you,  
there are people  
facing many of the same fears,  
and many hide it,  
without realizing it,  
behind *how are you's*  
and *I am fine's*.

And you can hone a listening ear  
for the words beneath the words  
the thoughts beneath the phrases  
the feelings that do not reach their faces,  
as you slowly begin to wake up

to the honest voice  
inside of you  
beginning to sing  
with clarity and transparency  
for yourself  
and those around you.

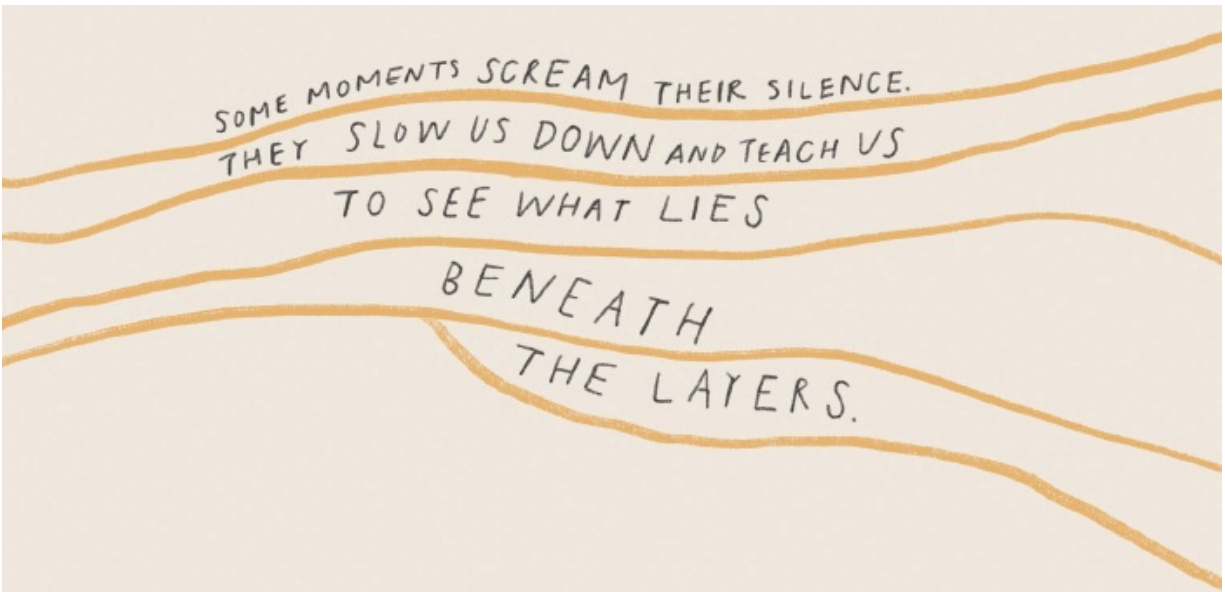


LET THE SPLASH OF COLORS  
IN THE SETTING SUN  
REMINDE YOU, AT THE END OF  
IT ALL, YOU HAVE PERMISSION  
TO BE UNDONE HERE.

EVEN AS YOU SIT SILENTLY,  
NOT KNOWING WHAT TO SAY,  
YOUR PRESENCE IS STILL A GIFT  
THAT SHINES LIGHT  
IN A MEANINGFUL WAY.

LET TODAY BE THE DAY

YOU ARE KIND TO YOURSELF  
AND FOCUS ON BELIEVING  
WHAT IS BEAUTIFUL AND TRUE.  
AND THIS DOES NOT MEAN  
YOU IGNORE YOUR IMPERFECTIONS.  
IT MEANS, IN SPITE OF THEM,  
YOU BELIEVE  
THERE IS BEAUTY TO YOU.



Your past  
has shaped you  
and is part  
of who you are.  
It has left wounds  
forever stained on your skin.  
No matter how many times  
you have tried to forget

and let these stories fade away  
by keeping them out of direct light,  
it is okay  
if there are still days  
where you feel everything  
and you have to take a moment  
and say,  
“In many ways,  
this still affects me,  
but I am leaning into the grace  
that reminds me  
I am free  
to step out of the shadows  
and still know peace here.”



# FOR THE SOUL

## WHO YOU ARE

I stand in this valley  
watching how the yellow-green grass  
stretches up the blue mountain  
against the coral-colored sky—

and I am reminded  
no matter the times  
my weary heart has tried,  
nothing can wash away  
the richness of these lands,  
where silence is stronger than thunder.  
My gratitude as steady as the hills,  
I want to surrender to  
gravity  
remembering it is okay to feel small out here  
as one of a billion divinely intentioned parts  
of the morning hymn that has always been in you—  
then sings my soul  
*How Great Thou Art.*

And the thing about blooming is, nothing about the process is easy. It requires every part of you to stretch upward, with your roots firmly planted in the ground; and in the sun, and in the rain, and wind, you stand anyway, even against the pull of the soil. And through it all, one day you will see all along you were transforming. This took everything out of you, but the struggle was beautiful and necessary for your growth.

Amidst all the pressure  
to keep going and to keep going,  
may you also take time to learn the art of being;  
being Loved,  
being Held,  
being Seen,  
being in the Presence  
of the One  
who calls you  
to rest.

For beyond your accomplishments  
and your calendars, and your lists,  
you were made with purpose and intention  
to reflect Glorious Light  
and to abide in Love  
that reminds you  
even in the pause  
you are still  
where you need to be.

No matter  
how yesterday  
unfolded before your eyes  
and no matter the stacks of worries  
burdening your mind  
that have left you unsettled  
or confused,  
Light is still pouring in  
reminding you over and over again  
to surrender,  
to let go,



for these troubles  
are bound to shadows  
that cannot survive in this new light.  
Bask in these beams of sun  
as you find your new beginnings,  
a new way of seeing,

a grace-filled way  
of living.

Oh, how steady  
hope makes the soul  
in the river rush of things  
you cannot control.  
For somehow through it all,  
you have still been made whole.  
Because as sure as the water  
makes way  
past the river stones,  
so does hope carry you  
past the depth  
of your unknowns,  
under fogged and white-gray skies  
that demand  
the most of tired eyes,  
the sound of the rushing river  
gently speaks:  
*all is passing,*  
*truly passing.*

What if all the imperfections  
and the flaws  
were only part of your story—  
not the sum of who you are?  
What if all along,  
you were made to be beautiful,  
and it was only the dirt from this broken world  
that made you doubt your shining self?

And what if you were not alone,  
as you once thought,  
and when a friend  
told you  
she would be there,  
she truly meant it?

What if for every time you were afraid,  
you remember how you were brave,  
and it only escaped your memory  
because bravery is  
natural these days?

Perhaps there are a million reasons  
to never take the leap,  
to never take the time to think  
your presence means anything,  
but I hope you know  
there are more reasons to believe  
this life is worth living for.

I hope you can look down  
into that warped well of your imperfections  
knowing whatever you find there

can never even compare  
to the greatness in your soul,  
shining wildly through.



Where is strength found?  
not only in the highs,

but neither only  
in the lows.

It is found in the grasslands  
and the wastelands  
and the footpaths  
in between them  
in your laments  
your anthems  
and the quiet hours  
in between.

strength  
can arise  
in these places,  
unexpected.

In winter,  
the trees are bare,  
and the sun is glorious  
casting silhouetted tree limbs.  
The air blows cold around us.

We are seen.  
We are known.

O Great Light  
of the world,  
be my guide,  
be the Path

beneath my feet  
when I feel  
that I might sink.

Be the river  
in the desert.  
Be the storm when my soul  
is torn and dry.  
Be my hope,  
be my treasure,  
be my peace,  
when I  
am lost inside.

Be everything  
when I am nothing,  
be the Way  
in the wild.  
Be my guide.  
Be my guide.

More than anything,  
I hope you find your way home.  
I hope you find  
what speaks to your heart  
like nothing else in the world  
has spoken to you before.

As you sit in this terminal  
hoping this new city  
will be home,  
the home that you've longed for

where your name will be safe,

where you will finally

belong—

as you're here

lugging luggage,

bumping shoulders

of others charging through

with apparently important things to do,

and you're berated by

the mechanic clattering of voices

citing numbers,

directions,

delays,

Alone

inching toward your unknown.

But take time

to listen

for the ever-present Voice

gently whispering,

“I'll guide you.”

And may your love for traveling far

remind you of traveling grace

finding you here in the crowd

reminding you that you belong,

no matter where you are.

through all the times you fell

and all the times you ran

not knowing what was next

or where your feet would land,

and all that was lost in translation

of a language you could not understand,  
even then,  
you were known  
and you were still  
headed home.

in all that has changed  
or stayed the same,  
you have found comfort in the Voice  
rising up above the noise:  
“You are loved,  
you are loved,  
you are dearly, dearly loved,  
and you’re worthy of the journey  
of being.  
You’re worthy of the journey  
of finding home  
in Me.”

Step into the unknown and learn  
as you go.

Walk through fire and  
come forth refined  
as gold  
and journey on.

You have been made new,  
and you see  
nothing is ordinary.

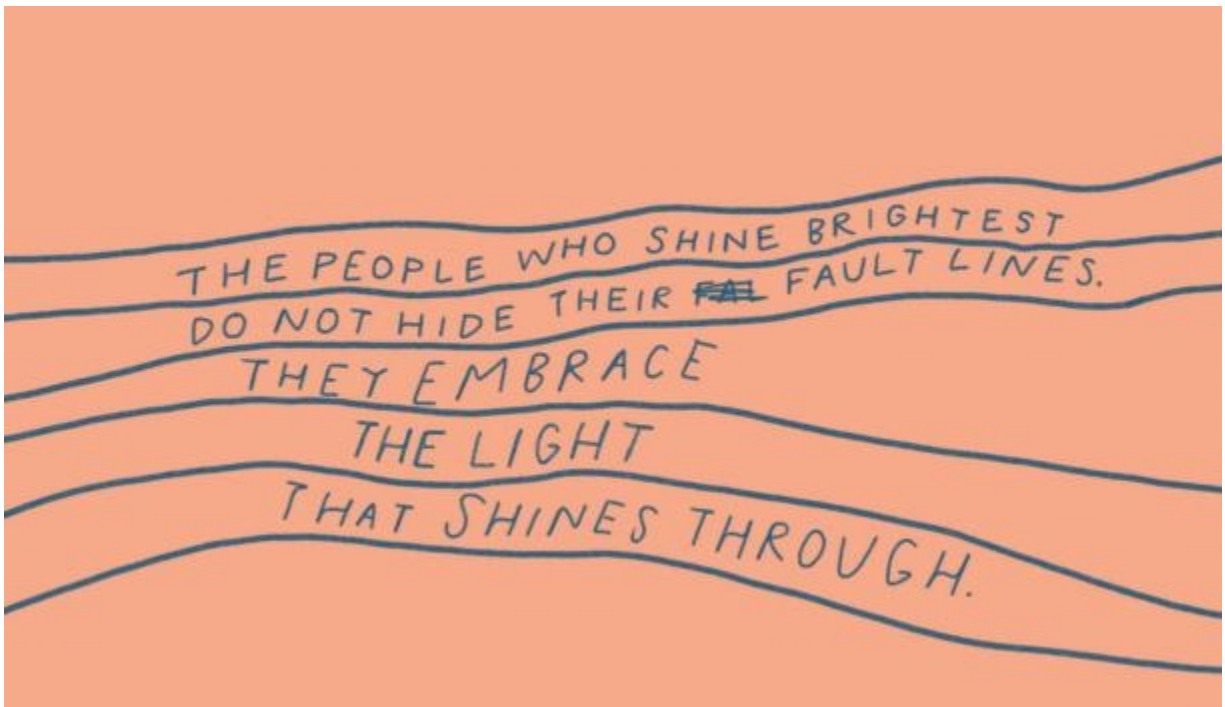
SUNRISES  
IN AUGUST,

HANDWRITTEN  
*letters* ON  
TUESDAY,

AND AFTERNOON  
LULLABIES  
OF CARS  
DRIVING BY.

THOSE THINGS  
ARE WORTH  
LIVING FOR TOO.





You are being called beyond the shore  
to a place you have never been before.  
The water may be colder there,  
and the ocean floor may seem too far,  
but you are going to learn more of who you are.  
So keep your eyes open  
as you venture out today.  
These waters are new,  
but do not be afraid.  
You are only going to grow here,  
as your eyes and heart become open  
to the process of becoming.

Let us leave room

for bold adventure  
and wake up at dawn  
in search of wonder.  
Let us find joy  
in the grit  
of the wonderlands  
and look for Light  
in everything.  
For all along,  
we were made for this:  
to step fully  
into unknowns,  
to know deep  
within the night,  
within the soul,  
we were not meant  
to go alone.  
In every single  
moonlit tree,  
we were meant  
to see those leaves,  
and we were meant  
to see the beauty  
in the swaying arms  
of branches.

So let us find rest  
in these woods  
so new to us,  
knowing  
this is where  
we will learn  
to grow

to love  
to trust.

This is life.

You have been pulled into the fierce winds  
carrying you over the barren hills,  
leaving you bruised  
on the shores of this rocky coast.

Your eyes have been reopened.  
This life is broken.

Come now,  
come falling  
on your knees  
on this bed of sand  
where the stones have washed away  
and the softened earth awaits,  
take all the time you need  
to be undone  
and breathe.

Through all that is changing,  
there are practices  
we must hold on to:  
wisdom,  
love,  
gratitude.  
Gratefulness for how life's lessons  
have shaped us,

and no matter  
where the journey takes us,  
we know we never go alone.

I want to be more than my ruins. I want to firmly plant my feet on top of the fallen columns of a house I built out of my pride. From death to life, I want to know the Love way of rising up, fully alive from the depths within me, letting this new way of life reshape my way of seeing.

WHILE YOU WAIT  
FOR CLARITY  
AND ANSWERS  
TO PRAYERS  
THAT HAVE PULLED ME  
FROM MY SLEEP,  
I WILL REST  
WITH SWEET ASSURANCE  
THAT DEEP WITHIN I HAVE THIS HOPE,  
AN ANCHOR FOR MY SOUL,  
“YOU WILL NOT SWIM THESE DEPTHS ALONE.”

And as you start to ascend,  
you feel the force of heavy winds  
and for the first time,  
you wonder if you should give up,  
turn around,  
and go back down  
the mountain

and find a smaller hill to climb.

This is a broken place,  
and you are treading on splintered ground,  
trying to make sense of your progress,  
and where you thought  
you'd be by now.

And what was familiar is now too distant,  
and what was unknown is now too close,  
and you are wondering what to keep  
and what to just let go.

But now that you're here, let it be.

Slow down and let it be.

Find new rhythms

in the silence

to cling to lasting peace,

knowing well within your soul

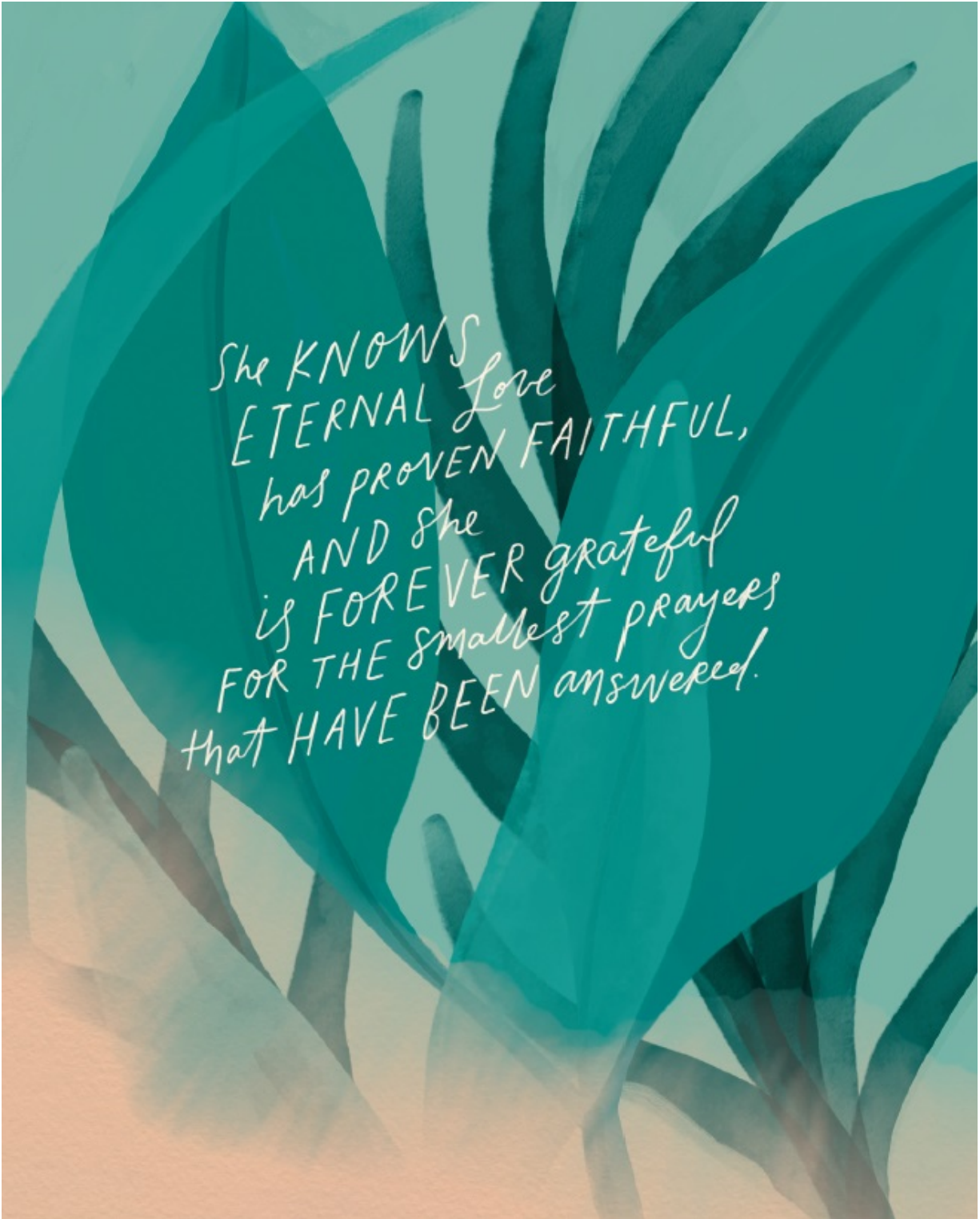
you will have the strength you need

to make it through

these unknowns.

Peace blooms  
as you learn  
your soul is steady  
in chaos.

Live  
as a stone  
in rushing water,  
grounded  
no matter the current.



Decorate with flowers

or words  
or music and  
open the door for an old friend.

Just be there,  
and listen,  
without a word—  
human to human,  
heart to heart.

We are all  
blooming,  
and as we breathe this same air,  
side by side,  
we are reminded  
at our core,  
how similar we are.

What can we say  
of this day?

It is here  
this one time  
and then  
never will be again.

But we made time to see  
the way autumn burns leaves  
in the park  
and  
the thousands of footsteps,  
hundreds of faces,







IN FULL MOONS,  
IN FULL BLOOMS,  
AND IN THE SOUND OF RAIN.

I HOPE YOU FIND JOY  
IN WHAT IS CHANGING  
AND IN WHAT IS FAITHFUL  
AND HAS STAYED THE SAME.

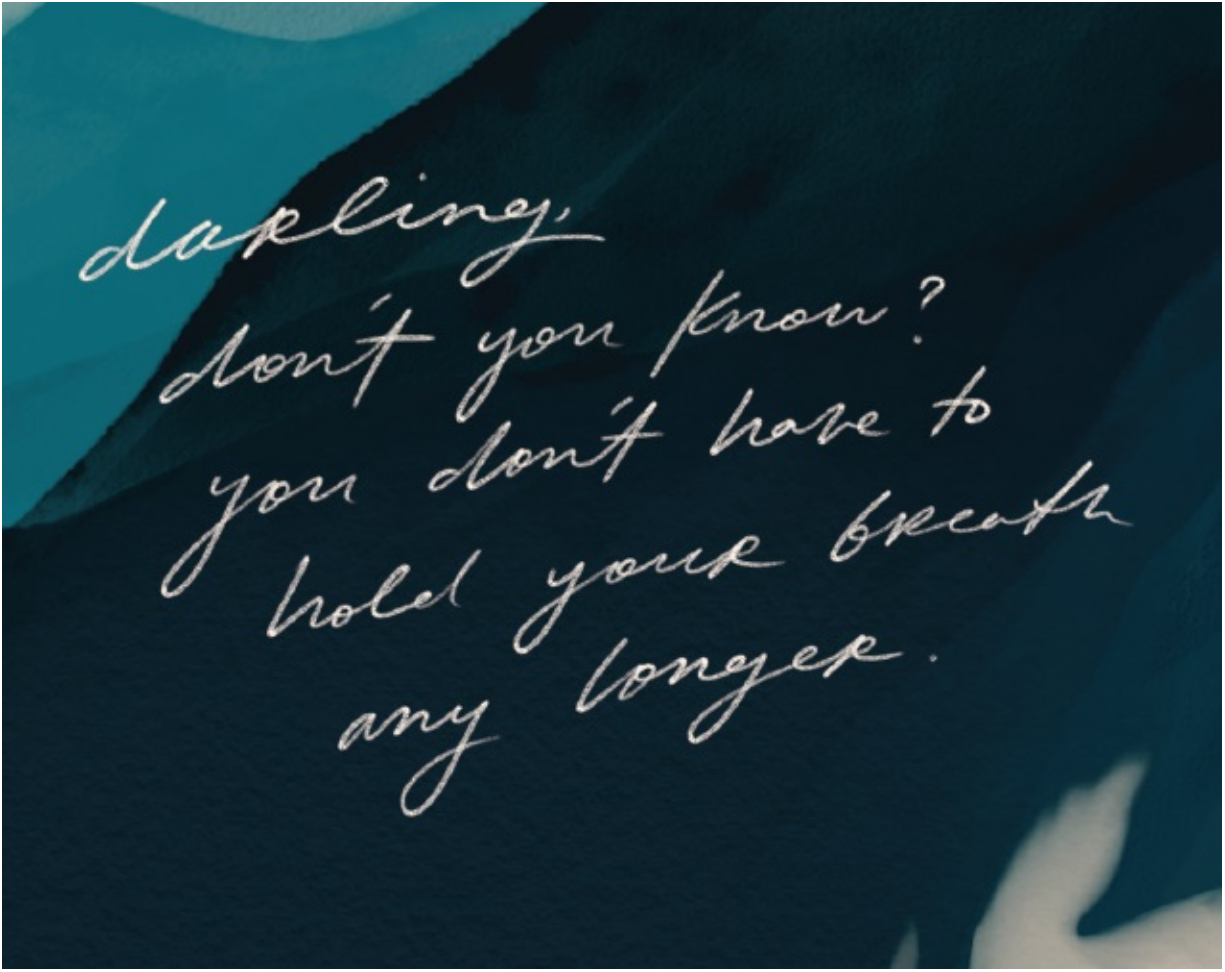
I will let life in.

I will not concern myself  
gathering gold and silver  
that can be taken from me.  
I have to trust there is more to me  
that goes beyond what I can see.  
There is more to me  
than what I know today.  
I will stretch my hands up to the sky,  
to say, "I am afraid but I will try,"  
remembering  
the sea was split in two  
the veil was torn in two  
so I could know deep  
within my soul,  
what it means to be Free.

I will not hold back,  
for Love  
has not  
held back on me.

It is easy to admire  
the grandeur of  
mountains  
while failing to mention  
the lack of oxygen  
at their altitudes.

But I find gratitude  
climbing  
a little closer  
to the sky,  
rising up  
from the surrounding land.  
I catch my breath  
and I stand.

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a dark blue fabric. The fabric has white cursive text written on it. The text is a comforting message. The background is a lighter blue, suggesting a sky or a wall.

darling,  
don't you know?  
you don't have to  
hold your breath  
any longer.

REMEMBER,  
REMEMBER,  
YOU ARE ;MORE;  
THAN FLESH AND BONES.  
YOU ARE A SOUL  
NEEDING GRACE  
AND SALVATION  
ON THE NARROW  
JOURNEY HOME.

We stand tall in the high grass with wind on our backs and hope in our lungs.

We belong in this life.

There is a place for all of us here, by grace, there is a place for all of us here.

THERE IS MORE TO KNOW  
AND MORE TO SEE,  
AND ALL OF YOUR LIFE'S  
MOST COLORFUL STORIES  
WILL PREPARE YOU  
FOR WHO YOU NEED TO BE.

No matter the doorkeepers  
who told you that you were not welcome,  
leaving you to wander  
out into the margins  
of a crowded city,  
into the alleyways  
late into the night—  
beneath the wounds of their words,  
there is still this lasting truth:  
you are not doomed  
to be lost forever.

You are free to find comfort.  
You are free to be at rest  
and be at home  
in your wilderness,  
exhaling  
involuntarily,

free,  
knowing there will be other doors  
that will open up to you.  
But in the meantime,  
out here,  
you have been found in the peace  
in the piano music  
drifting down  
from the stairwell,  
to carry on while waiting,  
feeling secure  
from here, within  
right where you are.



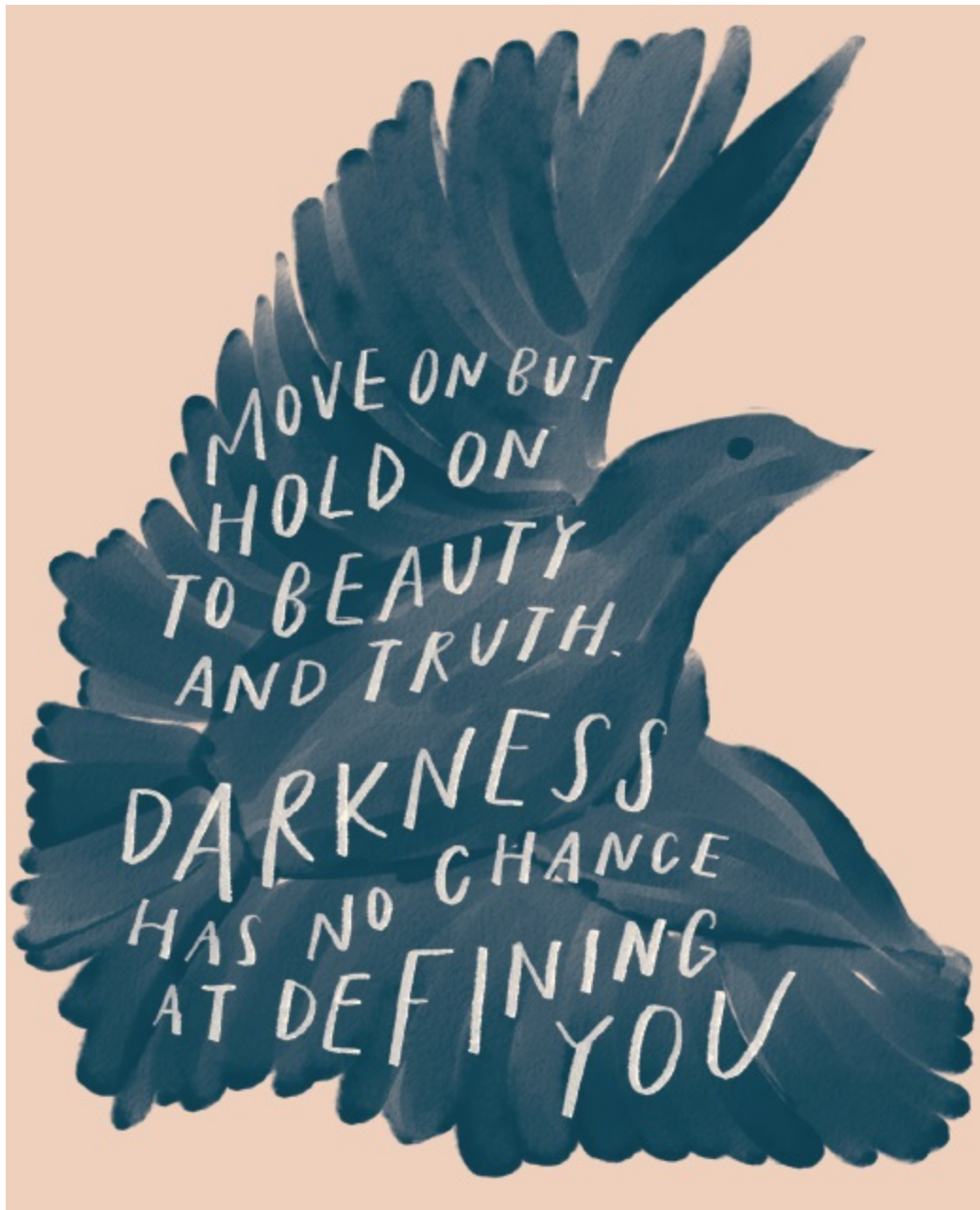




THE ROAD  
THAT TAKES YOU FAR

MAY BEND YOU  
AND BREAK YOU,

BUT IT MAKES YOU  
WHO YOU ARE.



And may you raise your tired hands  
in Spirit and in Truth  
knowing deep within your soul  
by grace, you'll make it through.  
You'll look back on days like this  
with blessed, warm relief

that in the darkness you still chose  
to see the Light in everything.

You have endured  
storms passing through,  
and even though they shook you to your bones,  
they did not stay with you.

Nothing more than yesterday's evening rain,  
and though the ground is still damp in the morning,  
this day is brand-new.

And it is okay if there are days  
when you feel a little out of frame  
and you hear rumbles of thunder  
from where you thought the sky had cleared.  
Though you cannot control the storm  
it cannot hold you forever.  
This is what the soul knows.

Light still fills the sky,

and though your heart gets heavy,  
and your eyes have struggled  
to find  
the stars above  
the streetlights,  
you are free  
to believe  
Light is still  
pouring in,

above,  
around,  
beneath,  
within.

AND WHEN YOU GO  
INTO THAT DEEP NIGHT  
AND YOU FIND  
UNBRIDLED FOOTPATHS  
AND STARLESS SKIES,  
MAY YOU KNOW  
EVEN THEN  
A FIRE BURNS WITHIN  
AND WITH EVERY BREATH  
IT IS REKINDLED  
OVER AND OVER AGAIN.