



You Do Not Have to Earn Your Rest

LETTER THREE

From the Porch

Dear one,

There is something I want to say plainly, because I know how easily it gets buried beneath everything else:

You do not have to finish the list before you are allowed to rest.

You do not have to empty the sink.

Answer every message.

Solve the problem.

Take care of everyone.

Reach the end of your strength.

You do not have to become visibly exhausted before your need for rest becomes legitimate.

Rest is not a reward waiting at the end of a perfectly managed life.

It is part of being alive.

And you are allowed to need it now.

Maybe you have spent years telling yourself:

After I finish this.
Once everyone is settled.
When the house is clean.
When the work slows down.
When I have done enough to deserve it.
But there is always another thing.
Another load.
Another email.
Another person needing an answer.
Another task that would make tomorrow easier.
The finish line keeps moving.
And rest keeps being postponed until some imaginary moment when nothing remains unfinished.
That moment rarely comes.
Life does not naturally hand us permission to stop.
Sometimes we have to choose it while something is still waiting.
Perhaps that feels uncomfortable.
Maybe sitting down while work remains feels careless.
Maybe saying no to a plan feels selfish.
Maybe going to bed early feels indulgent when someone else is still awake.
Maybe doing less makes you feel as though you are failing at the life you built.
You may have learned that good women are always available.
Good mothers keep going.
Good partners notice what needs doing.
Good workers give more.
Good daughters help.





Good friends show up.

Good people do not inconvenience anyone with their limits.

But a life built entirely around proving goodness through exhaustion eventually asks too much of the person living it.

You were never meant to disappear inside your usefulness.

Rest may be difficult not because you do not need it, but because stopping gives you time to feel how tired you actually are.

As long as you keep moving, the body has a task.

The mind has somewhere to go.

The feelings remain just behind you.

Then the room grows quiet.

The list is set down.

And suddenly there is sadness.

Irritation.

Loneliness.

Anxiety.

A deep tiredness that one night of sleep cannot repair.

If this happens, it does not mean rest is failing.

It may mean quiet has made something audible.

Be gentle with what you hear.

You do not have to solve that either.

There are many kinds of rest.

Sleep is one.



But sometimes the body is not the only part of us that is tired.
The mind may need rest from deciding.
The heart may need rest from worrying.
The nervous system may need rest from noise.
The spirit may need rest from being useful.
You may need a room where no one asks a question.
An hour without your phone.
A meal you did not prepare.
Time with someone who lets you be quiet.
A walk without turning it into exercise.
A day when nothing becomes content, progress, or proof.
Rest is not always lying down.
Sometimes it is being free from demand.
I wonder what you imagine would happen if you stopped before everything was done.
Would someone be disappointed?
Would tomorrow be harder?
Would the house reveal that actual people live there?
Would you have to admit that there are limits to what one person can hold?
Maybe some things would remain unfinished.
But unfinished does not always mean neglected.

Sometimes it means you chose not to abandon yourself in order to complete them.

You are allowed to leave a dish in the sink.

You are allowed to answer tomorrow.

You are allowed to make the easy meal.

You are allowed to cancel because your body has reached its limit.

You are allowed to lie down even if the laundry is not folded.

You are allowed to take a quiet hour without making it useful.

You are allowed to protect your energy before it is completely gone.

These are not moral failures.

They are ordinary acts of care.

Maybe no one taught you how to rest without guilt.

Maybe rest in your childhood was interrupted.

Maybe stillness meant someone would find another task for you.

Maybe you were praised for being mature, helpful, undemanding, and easy.

Maybe the safest way to belong was to need very little.

So now, even when no one is asking, you keep working.

Even when the room is quiet, a voice inside says:



You should be doing something.

That voice may have helped you once.

It may have kept you useful, prepared, or protected.

But it does not need to govern every evening of your life.

You can thank it.

And still sit down.

Rest is not evidence that you have lost ambition.

It does not mean you no longer care.

It does not make you lazy.

Rest makes room for patience.

Clarity.

Pleasure.

Creativity.

Kindness that is not offered from the final scraps of your energy.

But even these benefits are not why you are allowed to rest.

You do not have to prove that rest will make you more productive later.



You are allowed to rest because you are a person, not a machine whose pauses must justify themselves through better output.

Perhaps you are in a season when deep rest is not fully available.

There may be a baby waking.

A loved one who needs care.

A demanding job.

Health concerns.

Financial strain.

Responsibilities that cannot simply be set down.

I will not pretend a candle and an early bedtime can resolve that.

Sometimes rest comes only in fragments.

Five quiet minutes in the car.

A shower with the door closed.

Someone holding the baby while you sleep.

A meal delivered.

A message left unanswered.

Your head against the chair for one full breath.



Small rest is still rest.

Take the fragments without judging them for not being enough.

And where support is possible, let yourself receive it.

Be specific.

“Could you handle dinner tonight?”

“Can you take this one thing?”

“I need half an hour without being interrupted.”

“I cannot decide that today.”

“Please do not ask me to organize it.”

People may not know what rest requires from them unless you tell them.

You are not asking for permission to matter.

You are allowing someone else to participate in the life you have been carrying.

There may be a part of you that believes resting will cause everything to fall apart.

Perhaps you have evidence for that.

Perhaps every time you have stepped back, someone has forgotten, complained, or left the work waiting for you.

That is painful.

But the answer cannot always be that you never stop.

Sometimes the system around you needs to feel the absence of your overfunctioning before anything can change.

You are allowed to let other people notice what you have quietly been holding.

You are allowed to stop preventing every inconvenience.

For today, I want you to choose one stopping place.

Not when everything is done.

A time.

A moment.

A line you will not cross.

When you reach it, say:



This is enough for today.
The sentence may feel untrue.
Say it gently anyway.
Turn off the light.
Close the computer.
Leave the room.
Put the work somewhere it can wait.
Then choose the kind of rest that feels most honest.
Sleep.
Quiet.
Warmth.
A familiar show.
A book.
A bath.
Music.
Nothing at all.
Do not ask yourself to rest beautifully.

Just stop.

And when the guilt arrives, because it may, do not treat it as proof that you should get back up.
Guilt is sometimes only the discomfort of doing something differently.
Let it sit nearby.

It does not get to decide.

You can feel guilty and still rest.
You can feel unfinished and still rest.
You can know someone might prefer more from you and still rest.



The feeling does not cancel the need.

There is a chair here for the version of you who has not completed everything.

She does not have to stand at the edge of the porch until she has earned her way in.

She can sit now.

With the unanswered message.

The imperfect house.

The unfinished work.

The people she loves.

The things she still worries about.

All of it can exist beside her.

She is still allowed to close her eyes.

Dear one, you have already done enough to be worthy of care.

You did enough before you began.

You did not earn your right to rest through how much you carried today.

That right was always yours.

So let the list wait.

Let tomorrow hold what belongs to tomorrow.

And for this moment—

rest.

With warmth,

From the Porch

