



Not Everything Is Yours to Carry

LETTER SIX

From the Porch

Dear one,

There is a difference between caring about something and carrying it.

It can be easy to forget that.

Especially when you are someone who notices.

Someone who feels the shift in a room.

Someone who hears what was not said.

Someone who can sense when another person is hurt, disappointed,
angry, or pulling away.

When you are built with that kind of awareness, other people's emotions
can begin to feel like instructions.

Fix this.

Make it better.

Explain yourself.

Keep the peace.

Take responsibility.

Do something before anyone becomes uncomfortable.

And so you step in.

You soften the conversation.

You absorb the tension.

You carry the worry home.

You keep thinking about what happened long after everyone else has moved on.

But dear one, not everything you feel belongs to you. And not everything that matters is yours to carry.

Some things are yours.

Your words.

Your choices.

Your promises.

The way you treat people.

The repair that is needed when you have caused harm.

The truth you know you need to tell.

The responsibilities you have willingly taken on.

These things belong in your hands.

But there are other things you may have been holding simply because they were placed near you.

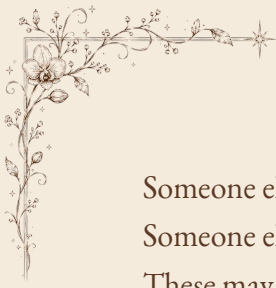
Someone else's reaction.

Someone else's avoidance.

Someone else's unwillingness to communicate.

Someone else's regret.





Someone else's decision not to change.

Someone else's discomfort with the boundaries you need.

These may affect you deeply.

But affecting you does not make them yours. Perhaps you learned early to take responsibility for the emotional

weather around you.

You knew when to be quiet.

When to make yourself small.

When to become helpful.

When to say the thing that would make everyone laugh.

When to calm someone down.

When to avoid asking for what you needed. Maybe peace in your home depended on your ability to read the room. Maybe love felt safest when everyone else was comfortable.

So you became attentive.

Adaptable.

Careful.

You learned to watch faces before listening to your own feelings. And perhaps that awareness helped you survive something difficult.

It may have protected you.

It may have made you deeply compassionate. But what once kept you safe can become exhausting when it follows you into every room of your adult life. You do not have to manage every atmosphere now. Someone can be disappointed in you without you having done something wrong.

That may be one of the hardest truths to accept. You can make a thoughtful, honest choice and still hurt someone's feelings.

You can say no gently and still be called selfish. You can step back from an unhealthy pattern and still be accused of changing.



You can choose what is right for your life and still become the difficult person in someone else's version of the story.

Their feelings may be real.

You do not have to dismiss them.

But their feelings are not always a verdict.

Sometimes disappointment simply means they did not receive what they wanted from you.

Sometimes anger means a boundary has interrupted access they had grown accustomed to.

Sometimes distance means the relationship can no longer continue in the same way.

You can care about their response without surrendering your entire decision to it.

It is not your responsibility to make every truth painless.

You can choose your words with care.

You can speak without cruelty.

You can listen.

You can apologize when an apology is needed. But you cannot control how someone understands what you say. You cannot ensure they tell the story fairly. You cannot keep them from feeling something difficult. And you cannot abandon yourself every time honesty creates discomfort.

There are conversations where kindness and clarity will still leave someone unhappy.

That does not mean the conversation should not happen. Maybe you carry other people's potential.

You can see who they could become.

What they might build.

How their life could change if they would only ask for help, make a decision, leave the situation, take responsibility, or believe in themselves.

You see it so clearly that their inaction feels unbearable.

So you encourage.

Remind.

Research.

Suggest.

Rescue.

You become more invested in their future than they appear to be. And each time they return to the same pattern, you feel disappointed all over again.

It is painful to watch someone you love choose what continues to hurt them.

But you cannot want another person's healing more than they do. You cannot carry someone into a life they have not chosen.

You can love them.

You can tell the truth.

You can offer support.

But the next step must eventually belong to them.



There are burdens that arrive disguised as loyalty. Keeping the secret that is hurting you.
Pretending not to notice what everyone knows. Protecting someone from the consequences of
their choices. Staying available because they have always depended on you. Telling yourself that
leaving, saying no, or stepping back would make
you disloyal.

*But loyalty that requires your continued harm is not devotion. Love does not ask you to become
the hiding place for what another
person refuses to face.*

Sometimes the most loving thing you can do is stop carrying the part
that belongs to them.

You may also be carrying stories about who you are.

That you are the responsible one.

The forgiving one.

The one who keeps the family together.





The one who does not give up on people.

The one who can handle more.

These identities may have brought you pride. They may reflect real and beautiful parts of you. But even a beautiful identity can become a burden when it leaves no room for your limits.

You are allowed to be loving and tired.

Dependable and unavailable.

Compassionate and finished.

Forgiving and no longer willing to remain close. You do not betray who you are when you stop proving it through pain. There are also worries we carry because worrying feels like participation.

If someone we love is struggling, it can feel wrong to experience peace.

If the future is uncertain, relaxing may feel careless. If we stop thinking about the problem,
perhaps we will be caught
unprepared.

So the mind circles.

Rehearses.

Imagines.

Plans for every possible outcome.

But worry does not always protect the people we love. Often it only causes us to suffer beside
them before anything has
happened.

You can be concerned without living inside the concern every hour.

You can care and still eat dinner.

Laugh.

Sleep.

Notice something beautiful.

*Your peace is not a betrayal of someone else's pain. Maybe you carry responsibility for things that
happened years ago.*

A choice you regret.

A moment you wish you could change.

A relationship you could not save.



A child you believe you should have protected better. A version of yourself who did not know what you know now. Regret can convince us that continued suffering is a form of accountability.

As though punishing ourselves long enough might finally repair the past.

But accountability asks us to learn.

To apologize where possible.

To change our behaviour.

To make repair when repair is available. It does not ask us to remain forever chained to the moment we failed. You are allowed to become someone wiser without hating the woman who had not yet learned.

Some things were never yours at all.

The way an adult behaved when you were a child. The family conflict you were pulled into. The silence someone used instead of communication.

The love someone was unable to give.

The betrayal you did not cause.

The absence you tried to explain by searching for something wrong with yourself.

You may have carried those things for years because no one told you where they truly belonged.

So let me tell you now: You were not responsible for making adults whole. You were not responsible for earning tenderness. You were not responsible for preventing someone else's harmful choices.

You were not too much.

You did not fail because another person could not meet you with care. Some burdens were handed to you before you were old enough to question them.



You are allowed to put them down now.

Putting something down does not mean it never mattered.

It does not erase what happened.

It does not make you cold.

It simply means you are no longer willing to carry it in the same way.

You may still remember.

You may still grieve.

You may still wish it had been different. But perhaps the memory can remain without living on your back. Perhaps grief can sit beside you instead of steering every decision. Perhaps love can exist without requiring access. Perhaps compassion can remain even after responsibility has been returned to its rightful owner.

Returning responsibility can be quiet.



You do not always need a confrontation. Sometimes it sounds like:

“I trust you to decide.”

“I cannot keep reminding you.”

“I care about what happens, but I cannot solve this for you.”

“I am not available for this conversation when I am being spoken to that way.”

“I understand that you are upset.”

“I cannot take responsibility for your reaction.”

“I have done what I can.”

These are not cruel sentences.

They are clear ones.

They allow each person to stand inside their own life. At first, putting something down may not feel like relief.

It may feel like guilt.

Fear.

Emptiness.

You may not know what to do with yourself when you are no longer managing the situation.



You may feel tempted to pick it back up simply because carrying it is familiar.

Familiar does not mean necessary.

Give yourself time to become accustomed to lighter hands. There may be consequences when you stop over-carrying. Someone may have to remember their own appointment.

Make their own decision.

Sit with their own discomfort.

Experience the result of what they chose.

This may be difficult to witness.

But consequences are not always cruelty. Sometimes they are the only place responsibility becomes visible. By constantly stepping between someone and the outcome of their choices, you may unintentionally keep them from learning what only their own life can teach them.



Stepping back is not always abandonment.

Sometimes it is respect.

And then there are burdens no one can carry for us.

Our own healing.

Our own choices.

Our own honesty.

Our own willingness to change.

Just as you cannot do another person's work, they cannot do yours. There may be a truth you have been hoping someone else will make easier.

A decision you want permission to make. A boundary you want them to understand before you set it. A life you want someone else to approve before you begin living it.

Support matters.

But there are moments when we must place our own feet on the ground.

Not because we are alone.

Because the step belongs to us.

So perhaps the question is not only:

What am I carrying?

But also:



Whose is it?

Ask gently.

This task.

This feeling.

This expectation.

This consequence.

This future.

This opinion of me.

Does it belong to my hands?

Or have I picked it up because I am afraid of what will happen if I do not?

Some things will remain yours.

Carry them with honesty.

Ask for support.

Give yourself rest.

But when you find something that belongs to someone else, imagine setting it back down at their feet.

Not in anger.

Not as punishment.



Simply as truth.

This is yours.

I cannot carry it for you.

You do not have to stop caring.

You do not have to close your heart.

You do not have to become indifferent to protect yourself.

The goal is not to love less.

It is to love without disappearing.

To remain compassionate without becoming responsible for every outcome.

To offer help without taking over.

To walk beside someone without carrying them on your back.

For today, choose one thing to return.



One worry.

One expectation.

One responsibility you have assumed without being asked. One emotional burden that does not belong inside your body.

You do not need to announce it.

Just loosen your grip.

Let the other person have their own experience. Let the unanswered question remain unanswered for tonight. Let the problem sit somewhere other than your chest. You may feel the urge to reach for it again. Instead, place your hands around something warm.

Feel their emptiness.

Do not rush to fill them.

There is nothing wrong with hands that are not carrying.

They can rest.

They can create.

They can receive.

They can reach toward the life that has been waiting for you beneath all that weight.

Dear one, you were never meant to carry everyone home.

You are allowed to walk beside them.

You are allowed to love them.

And you are allowed to keep enough strength for your own journey.

With warmth,

From the Porch

