M. SHAFFER PRESENTS

Seven Letters to the Heart That Wants to Love Again

Small reminders of hope, boundaries, and the possibility of beginning again

A complimentary companion to

LOVE ME LIKE I'VE NEVER BEEN BROKEN

These reflections offer encouragement, not therapy or personalized medical advice. You are free to take your time with every page.

LETTER 1

To the heart that is tired of being brave

You have become very good at getting through the day. You answer messages. You show up for work. You make dinner. You smile when people need you to. Sometimes, your life looks so ordinary from the outside that no one would guess how much courage it takes to live inside it.

You do not have to turn your pain into a lesson by tomorrow. You do not have to forgive on a schedule. If today all you can manage is to rest, you are still moving through your life with dignity.

Let yourself admit the truth without polishing it: I miss what I hoped would happen. I am sad about what did happen. Both things may be true. Neither makes me weak.

You can take care of your heart without locking it away. Start with something small tonight: put your phone down, make something warm, and ask yourself what you need rather than what you should have overcome by now.

A question for your journal: *What have I been carrying quietly that deserves to be acknowledged?*

LETTER 2

To the heart that confuses distance with safety

After being hurt, it can feel sensible to expect nothing from anyone. No expectations, no disappointment. No tenderness, no one close enough to leave a mark.

But a life without risk is not always a life without loneliness. There is a difference between choosing solitude because it nourishes you and choosing it because fear has convinced you that closeness is dangerous.

You are allowed to move slowly. You can make room for a conversation without promising a future. You can accept kindness without giving someone access to everything you have survived.

Healthy openness is not a door without a lock. It is a door you know how to open and close for yourself. Your boundaries are not obstacles to love; they help love become safe enough to grow.

A question for your journal: *What kind of connection could I welcome without rushing past my boundaries?*

LETTER 3

To the mother who has put herself last

You remember everyone else's appointments. You notice when their shoes are too small, when a school day was hard, when someone needs a hug. Somewhere along the way, your own wishes may have become things to think about later.

Perhaps you have said, "I don't want anyone now. I have my children." Sometimes that is a peaceful choice. Sometimes it is a shield against the fear that a new relationship might make you seem less devoted to them.

Your children deserve stability. You deserve dignity, tenderness, and a life that is yours as well. Those truths can live together. Loving someone new is not a requirement; neither is shutting down your heart to prove you are a good parent.

If companionship ever becomes part of your life again, let it enter slowly, with attention to your children's emotional safety and your own standards. Being a mother is part of your identity. It does not have to be its whole horizon.

A question for your journal: *What is one hope I have for myself—not only for the people I care for?*

LETTER 4

To the heart that thinks it missed its chance

It is easy to look at other people's photographs and believe everyone arrived on time except you. Weddings. Anniversaries. New babies. Smiling couples who seem certain of their place in the world.

You do not know the full story behind those photographs. And your life is not running late because it looks different from someone else's.

There is no age at which the wish to be understood becomes embarrassing. There is no deadline for learning how to trust. The future is not obligated to repeat your past simply because the past has been painful.

Let hope be modest at first. It can sound like: I might meet someone kind. I might enjoy a date. I might find happiness in ways I cannot yet imagine. That is enough hope for one day.

A question for your journal: *What possibility have I dismissed because I thought I was "too late"?*

LETTER 5

To the heart that wants to be chosen

Being wanted can feel intoxicating when you have spent months wondering whether you were ever enough. A message appears. Someone remembers your favorite drink. They ask questions and listen to the answers.

Enjoy those moments. But remember that being chosen is not the whole story. You are also choosing. You can notice whether their words match their actions, whether their curiosity includes respect, whether you feel more yourself after spending time together.

You do not need to audition for affection. You do not need to become smaller, quieter, or endlessly agreeable to keep someone interested.

Let mutual love feel mutual. There should be room for your questions, your calendar, your family, your no, and your yes. The right pace is the pace at which you can hear your own voice.

A question for your journal: *If I were choosing—not only hoping to be chosen—what would matter most?*

LETTER 6

To the heart learning the courage of hello

Sometimes courage is not a grand declaration. It is a smile across a room. A conversation at a bookstore. A sincere question asked without rehearsing the entire ending.

You may feel nervous. You may say something awkward. You may discover that the person is unavailable or uninterested. None of those outcomes makes you foolish for trying.

A first conversation is not a verdict on your worth. It is information. Stay curious. Notice whether the exchange feels comfortable and reciprocal. Leave if you need to. Continue if you want to.

You do not have to know how a story ends to enjoy its first sentence. Practice being present rather than trying to predict every possible goodbye.

A question for your journal: *What small, respectful step toward connection could I try this month?*

LETTER 7

To the heart that is beginning again

One day, your life may surprise you. You may notice that a song no longer hurts quite as much. You may laugh and realize you did not have to force it. You may meet a person whose kindness asks for nothing dramatic in return.

Or perhaps you will simply feel at home in your own company. That is not a consolation prize. It is a meaningful foundation for every relationship you may choose to build.

Your history deserves respect, but it does not have to write every line ahead. You can learn from disappointment without letting it become your only language.

When love arrives—romantic love, friendship, family affection, or love for the life you are making—let it find someone who knows their heart is worth protecting, and worth opening, too.

A question for your journal: *What does a hopeful, self-respecting new beginning look like for me?*

Your story is not over.

The invitation is not to rush toward love, but to remember that your heart deserves gentleness and choice.

Read the free book excerpt at

tourmaline-churros-e58b0d.netlify.app/love-again/

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