

ISSUE NO. 1

SEPTEMBER 2025

BECOMING



**RECOVERY AWARENESS
MONTH**

REMEMBER YOUR LIGHT AND EMBRACE YOUR BECOMING

**SPECIAL ISSUE:
HOPE HAS A
PULSE**



WHAT'S INSIDE

This collection is not about answers. It is about witness — and it is about rise. A witness to addiction and recovery, to the unshakable humanity of those who struggle, the quiet endurance of those who love them, and the radiant light that appears when they rise again.

Here you'll find the strength of families who refuse to stop hoping. The beauty of those who rise again after addiction. The truth that relapse is not failure, but part of the fight. And woven through every page is a single heartbeat: hope has a pulse.

This is for the light of the ones we lose too soon. For the resilience of the ones who stay. For the sacred persistence of those who rise again and again. And for the most extraordinary ones still in their becoming.

Written By Bria with Stills By Nicole

We have two featured articles from Bella & one from Cara.

We hope you enjoy and are remind of your light! We are so proud.

meet The Editor

read my story

Talking about oneself can be awkward, to say the least—at least for me. Whether you have a story or not (and on paper, I do): two-time cancer survivor, from wheelchair to walker, and a boatload of miracle babies. But I'm getting ahead of myself. My name is Briana Mae. Briana means strong, Mae means mother. My parents had no idea the foreshadowing they were doing when they named me. It's quite ironic how eventually, everything connects.

I was born on a rainy night in May, making me the elite sign—a Taurus. I'm the last of my siblings. The typical little sister: annoying and historically funny. I loved to read, to be outside. I had a family that loved me. Everything was fine. Everything was good—at least on the outside. On the inside, for years, I was quite literally dying. Isn't it insane how the essence of you can be an oxymoron? Your whole existence, a contradiction.

On September 17th, at twelve years old, I was diagnosed with Stage 4 Hodgkin's Lymphoma. I fought the good fight and I won. I did the intense chemotherapy, the radiation treatments. I lost all of my hair—but I was free. Free, yet so fucking sad. I felt so defeated, even though I "won." I was so confused as a twelve-year-old, wondering what about any of that signified that I won. I did nothing and had so much taken from me. All I did was sit there—the medicine did it. The same medicine that led to being told, at twelve, I would never have kids. I lost the ability to just be. Anxiety became a wave crashing over me. And who was this "me," anyway? I was no longer Briana. I was the girl who had cancer. The pity in everyone's eyes hurt worse than the surgeries. The loss of me—that was the real disease. And man, was it ever fleeting. I questioned everything. I questioned God. Did He not want me here?

As I was questioning Him—my faith, the point of life—He did it again. At fifteen, on September 18th, I found out I had relapsed. Stage 4B Hodgkin's Lymphoma. I was in awe, to say the least. Cancer was a ghost I couldn't outrun. I had to face it. I had to go through it again. And on my first day of treatment, I almost died. I had an allergic reaction to the chemotherapy and my throat closed. I was out for hours. But by the grace of God—and some overtime from the universe—I didn't.

That moment changed my life. It shifted the tone of everything that came after. Suddenly, it all started to click. I didn't get cancer to be punished. I got it—and got it again—to be blessed. Crazy to say, I know. But hear me out. My second diagnosis gave me all the answers I had been struggling to understand. The answer lies in the contradiction of it all—the act of living while dying, and the beauty of it. The beauty that lies in the struggle. The wisdom that comes from battling something alone. My diagnosis affected everyone deeply, but at the end of the day, it was just me—faced with the reality that I might die. The questions that come with that are immeasurable. What do you think? What do you believe? Where am I going to go? The craving to know, to try and have control over everything, while knowing damn well you're in a situation where you have none.

That's when I realized the weight of mind over matter. The genuine freedom that comes with letting go. The strength that seeps out of you when you find the will within yourself. I had to mourn my childhood, my teenage years, and at times, the ability of my limbs—but I got to celebrate my strength, my perseverance, and I found my thirst for life again. I was able to learn. To grow.

The reality is: there's nothing in this world without shadows. Even the most dazzling sights around cast them.

There's life in death, and death in life.

And somehow, that contradiction made everything make sense.

It reminded me that even in the middle of pain, something sacred can still exist—hope, laughter, love, the smallest acts of trying. I was dying, and yet I was more alive than I had ever been, because I was finally awake to what living really meant. I began to see miracles in ordinary moments: the way laughing with my friends felt, the way my body kept showing up for me even when it was breaking, the way people loved me without needing to understand the weight I was carrying.

That realization carried me—through treatment, through grief, through life. Even now, when things are hard, I go back to that truth: that everything is worth trying for, that every breath is worth being here for, and that there is a strength buried deep inside us, waiting to rise. No matter how dark the road ahead seems, we hold the fire within us to push through. It's not always easy, and it's not always clear how we'll get to the other side. But in the face of adversity, we are given the power to rise. There's a strength in us that's greater than any diagnosis, greater than any setback. Life might feel overwhelming at times, and the end may seem out of reach, but we must never forget: miracles happen every day. They told me it would take years for me to walk after treatment left me basically paralyzed, and yet I walked within the first year. They told me I'd never have children, and now I have three beautiful ones.

These experiences remind me that nothing is impossible, and even in our weakest moments, we carry the potential to defy the odds. When we face our darkest days, we are often standing at the cusp of our greatest breakthroughs.

I spent the last ten years allowing others and even myself to define me based on something that happened to me, but not based on my beliefs, my soul, my morals—not the core of who I am. We are not what happened to us. I was not being punished. My pain and struggle can bring light insight.

We can rise through it all. We will be resilient. We will have the life we deserve: a life that is calm, a life that is healthy, a life filled with peace and joy. We have the power within us to redefine our narrative, to rise above the things that once seemed impossible, and to create the future we've always dreamed of.



LISTEN WHILE YOU READ

SPOTLIGHT SONGS:
RISK BY FKJ & BAS | DREAM IN COLOR BY CORDAE



Hope Has Pulse

Hope is not loud.
It does not always arrive as lightning or trumpet sound.
Most days, hope is a whisper—breathing steady beneath the chaos.

It hides in small places: a laugh that slips through sorrow, a kindness unnoticed by the world, the fragile courage it takes to try again tomorrow.

Hope is elemental.
It is air and fire, stillness and water.
It exists because it cannot not exist. Even in darkness, it waits, patient as the dawn.

And here's the truth: hope is not something that finds us—it is something we choose to recognize. To name. To cling to. Hope is what we make it.
And because of that, hope is everywhere.

I have seen it most clearly in recovery.

Addiction is a labyrinth few of us can understand from the outside. It is a disease, as insidious as cancer, stripping down everything in its path. And yet—I have witnessed people claw their way back from its depths, gasping for air, bruised and scarred, but alive. That is hope embodied.

To survive addiction is not merely to endure. It is to perform an act of creation: to take the shattered pieces of a self and arrange them into something new. It is the most human act there is.

Recovery is philosophy in motion. It asks the ancient questions: What is strength? What is worth? What is the self when broken? And it answers, simply: The self remains. The self endures. The self can rise again.

I believe God does not waste a story. You were not pulled through the fire just to return to ash. You were brought through so others might see that rising is possible. Your scars are not shame—they are proof. Proof that you have wrestled with the impossible and still stand.

So if you are in recovery, know this: you are a philosopher of the soul. You are proof that destruction is not the end. You are evidence that hope has a pulse, that survival itself is sacred.

And if you are still in the fight—do not mistake yourself as lost. Hope is as close as your breath, as present as your heartbeat. Even stumbling, even weary, you are not alone, and you are not beyond rising.

Because to rise after the fall is not weakness—it is the oldest story humanity tells.
And you are living that story now.

Hope has a pulse.
And so do you



The Beauty In The Ones Who Rise Again

There is a certain kind of beauty that only belongs to those who have been broken.

Not the polished kind. Not the kind that comes easy. But the kind that has been carved out of pain, lit by fire, and remade in its glow.

When someone rises after addiction, they don't just return to who they were before. They emerge different—deeper, sharper, softer all at once. There is a steadiness in their step, a knowing in their eyes. They've been to the edge of themselves, and they've come back carrying wisdom most of us can't even name.

It is not an easy beauty. Addiction leaves scars. It takes pieces. It steals years. But those who rise again learn to live with what was taken, and still keep going. And that is a beauty beyond anything airbrushed or filtered.

The world loves a comeback story, but too often it overlooks the quiet, everyday rising—the ones who show up for their kids, who sit in the meeting, who laugh again for the first time in years. These are not small things. They are revolutions happening in plain sight.

The beauty is not just in the victory, but in the persistence. In the ones who fall seven times and stand up eight. In the ones who decide that today—just today—they will try again.

I've seen that beauty. And I'll tell you, it humbles me. Because to be remade after addiction is to carry both the shadow and the light inside you, and still choose the light. It's to know fragility and strength in the same breath. It's to know how sacred it is just to be here.

So if you are one of the ones who has risen—or is still rising—know this: your beauty is not in perfection, but in persistence. It is in your scars, your softness, your strength. It is in the fact that you lived through what was meant to destroy you, and you are still becoming.

The beauty in the ones who rise again is not just theirs. It's ours, too—because their rising reminds the rest of us that rising is possible.



WINGS

Over Our

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never did I think driving around town would bring me such sadness. passing the park and seeing the swings where you would push me until I felt I was flying. but now you are the one with wings. picturing your reflection in the diner window now makes my stomach hurt but not in the same way it did when we ate too many pancakes. going to the deli and seeing the coffee machine where you'd always make me the perfect french vanilla that I haven't drank since you've passed because I know it won't taste the same and makes me regret never finishing them. seeing a newspaper blow across the road brings me back to sunday mornings when you would always make sure to save me the cartoons so we could read them together. Garfield was our favorite. the same roads we would drive to get ice cream are now the same roads i have to take to see your grave and the memory of those car rides replay in my head every time. coffee ice cream in a cone or a banana shake that you would finish before we even left the parking lot. seeing a white box truck drive by instantly takes me back to when we were constantly fixing yours and I would pin pictures I made for you in the back of it. almost everything around me is just a constant reminder of all of the memories we shared and it makes the fact that you aren't here to make more of them sink in. instead now we make memories in your honor and I can only hope you are walking beside us through every one. I miss you so much. - cara



The Light We Still See In Them

I grew up in a small town. The kind of place that, on paper, looks perfect. Google it and you'll see: safe, quiet, "a good place to raise kids." And I am grateful—I know it could have been worse. But I hate the comparison game. Just because someone has it worse doesn't mean what you've lived through isn't still bad. Bad is still bad.

And the truth is, what's bad about my town isn't the place—it's the loss. Not just the ones we bury, but the ones we watch fade.

Because I've seen the brightest lights here. The most magnetic boys grow into men. The smartest, the most capable. And it's heartbreaking to watch them shrink under the weight of addiction.

I don't say that with judgment. I say it because I see how capable they are—how much they don't see it for themselves. They think so lowly of who they are, and then they stack addiction on top of that, burying themselves deeper. But being an addict doesn't make you beneath anyone. If anything, it's proof of how hard you've been fighting just to feel okay.

Because that's what addiction really is, isn't it? Not weakness. Not failure. It's survival. It's the body and mind clawing for any way to hold on, even if it's a way that hurts. It's not about not caring. It's about wanting to care so badly that you'll reach for anything that promises relief, even for a moment.

And still, we talk about addicts like they're less than human. Like they're throwaways. We reduce them to mugshots, gossip, and statistics. But I've seen the truth. I've seen the resilience in their eyes. The humor that still slips out in the middle of the pain. The kindness they show, even when they can't find kindness for themselves. That's not weakness. That's strength most people couldn't imagine holding.

But I won't lie to you. Addiction is cruel. It steals. It breaks families. It turns dreams into ashes. And no amount of love, no amount of light, can always pull someone out until they're ready. That's the hardest part—loving someone who's lost in it, wanting to shake them awake, but knowing that healing can't be forced.

Still, I can't sit back and pretend like these people are any less worthy. I can't stomach a world that writes them off. Because they are not their addiction. They are people—capable, brilliant, magnetic people—who are in a fight they didn't ask for.

And maybe if we stopped treating them like criminals first and humans second, maybe if we stopped whispering about them like they're shameful, they'd feel safe enough to rise again.

So if you're reading this, and you've ever felt buried by addiction, hear me: you are not beneath anything. You are not hopeless. You are not broken beyond repair. You are not weak. You are here—and that in itself is proof of your strength.

Because survival, in all its messy, painful, heartbreaking forms, is still holy.

And for anyone reading this and still holding on, you're not alone—and you don't have to walk this path alone

The Quiet Strength of the Ones Who Stay

Addiction doesn't just touch one person. It ripples outward, spilling into families, friendships, and circles of love. It arrives like a storm, and suddenly everyone is caught in its tide.

We don't talk enough about the ones who stay—the mothers, fathers, siblings, friends, partners—those who carry the invisible weight. They are the late-night answerers, the silent pray-ers, the ones who sit awake wondering if tonight will be the night the phone rings with news that shatters.

There is a quiet strength in these people. A strength that doesn't shout, but endures. A strength born from love. Because to keep loving someone who is hurting themselves—over and over—is one of the hardest things a human heart can do.

Philosophers have wrestled for centuries with what love is. Some say it's desire, some say it's duty, some say it's the pursuit of beauty. But love in the orbit of addiction teaches us another definition: love as endurance. Love as faith. Love as the refusal to give up, even when every logical reason says you should.

And yes, it hurts. Loving through addiction is not romantic. It's not tidy. It's messy, weary, lonely. Families carry grief and shame that often go unseen. Their strength costs them something.

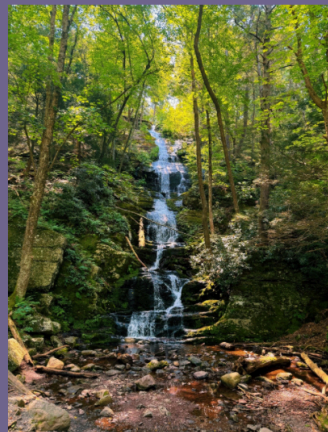
But here's what I've also witnessed: the beauty when that love is met with a rise. When the person you prayed for, cried for, almost gave up on—finally comes back. The joy of that moment is indescribable. It's as if you're seeing them for the first time, but also seeing every version of them you thought you'd lost—all returned in a single breath.

That love? It's fierce. It's grateful. It's the kind of love that knows the depth of loss and therefore cherishes the miracle of return. It's a love that cannot be faked, because it has been tested in fire and still remains.

So to the families, the friends, the ones who stayed: your love matters. Your strength matters. Even when it hasn't "fixed" anything, even when it feels too small—it carries weight. It makes room for the possibility of a rise.

And when that rise does come, your love is part of it. You were part of the net that caught them. Part of the reason they still had something to come home to.

The quiet strength of the ones who stay is not quiet at all. It is one of the loudest forms of love the world will ever know.





224 TALKS

224 stands for today, tomorrow, forever. 224 Talks is where we sit, meet each other and our own human with questions that explore us, our soul, faith, life, our little world. The community in ourselves and around us. Here are some questions you can sit with in your loud, your quiet and indifference; as well as some encouragement. We've paired this with pages for you to jot your thoughts, draw them, or to look at while you're in them.

[illegible]

I want to ask you something that might sting: is your life really yours? I'm curious. How many people are actually living a life that belongs to them?

Do you take the risks you dream about?

Do you speak with your truest parts on your tongue?

Do you romanticize your life the way you want to, or do you just watch it happen?

Because I can say this with one hundred percent certainty: my life is mine.

Every ounce of who I am—I'm finally living in it. For the first time ever.

Now, I know the world throws things at us we can't control. I'm not denying that. But with what you can control—with your choices, your voice, your body, your love—is your world, your life yours?

Really sit with that for a second. Don't rush past it.

And if the answer is no, then I want to ask why?

What are you gaining by living in a reality that isn't rooted in you—your values, your joy, your essence?

Because here's the truth: fuck thaaat.

And I don't say that with judgment. I say it with compassion, because I've been there. And honestly, that was the saddest part of my life.

I don't want to just exist. I want to take this world and live. Bask in it.

Enjoy it. Scream yeehaw and mean it.

That's where the cowgirl in me was born.

I tell everyone: I broke up with my ex self and became a cowgirl. Half-joke, full-truth.

Because that was the moment I realized: I cannot stay in any situation where my life doesn't belong to me.

Not because I can't handle relationships, or responsibility, or reality.

But because I cannot handle any environment that does not allow me to be free.

Free to ride this life with the most fun, the most yeehaws, and the most briessence I can possibly pour into it. As the healthiest, most conscious and considerate I can be. To myself, to others.

And you need to do the same. Please—for the love of God. If not for me, for Him. For YOU.

You lose nothing but the things that were never meant for you anyway.

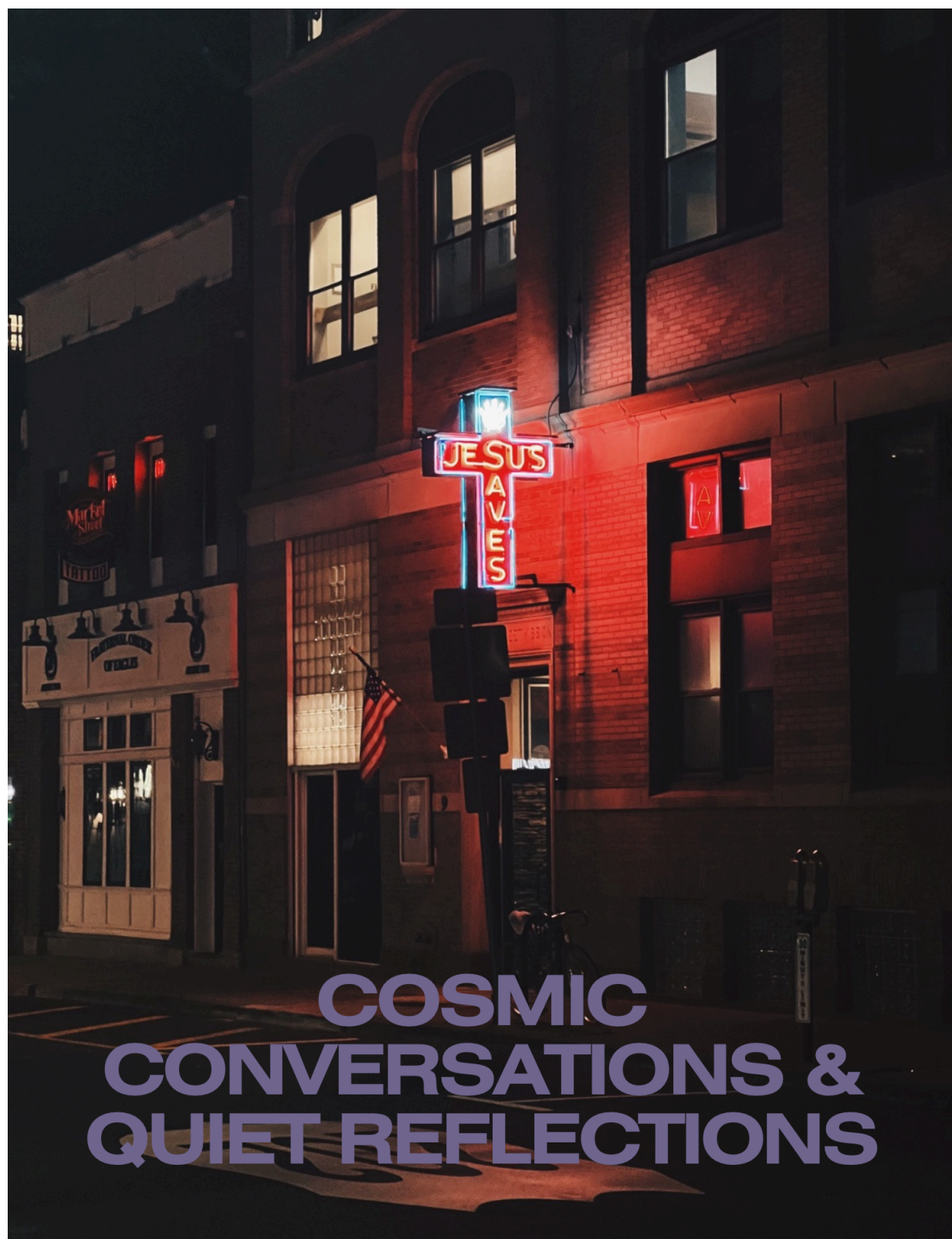
So as we step into September, into a new season, in to a month that celebrates your recovery, into a new era of becoming—remember this:

you are not alone. We're all figuring it out. We're all choosing ourselves in big and small ways.

And when you do that—when you choose yourself—there's no more tug-of-war between who you are and what life demands of you.

Because you've already chosen you.

So don't just live. Live yours.





COSMIC CONVERSATIONS

There are some truths you don't find by looking. They reveal themselves when you stop searching, stop forcing, and start listening. This is the slow, quiet work of becoming—of being present with what's here instead of chasing what should be. We're told to move fast, to know what we want, to define everything before it even has time to form.

But what if the answers we need arrive not with certainty, but with softness?

These six ideas—from science, spirit, and soul—remind us that truth isn't always loud, and growth isn't always visible. As above, so below. As within, so without.

1. The Observer Effect

In quantum physics, the act of observing something changes its behavior.

We want clarity. So we name things. We diagnose, define, dissect. But sometimes, the more we look at something—especially a feeling, a connection, a decision—the less natural it becomes. It's like staring too hard at your reflection until it warps. Sometimes, the purest things grow best when they're witnessed gently, not analyzed to death. Trust doesn't always come from naming. Sometimes it comes from letting be.

2. Cognitive Dissonance

When two truths live in you at once, it stretches your soul.

You can love someone and still need space. You can want a relationship and still crave solitude. You can believe in your worth and still feel the ache of insecurity. Holding opposites isn't weakness—it's wisdom. It's your psyche adjusting to a new shape. Discomfort doesn't mean it's wrong. It means it's real.

3. Saturn Returns

Around age 29, Saturn returns to where it was at your birth—shaking your foundation and demanding growth.

Even if you're not near your Saturn Return, you can feel the energy: the slow, undeniable pull to ask yourself, "Is this the life I actually want?" It's the peeling away of old expectations. The reckoning with your identity. The sacred pause between what you've inherited and what you choose. Becoming isn't flashy—it's layered. And sometimes, the pause is the point.

4. Temporal Illusions

Time stretches and shrinks based on our awareness.

Ever notice how months in a relationship can feel like years, while years of people-pleasing fly by unnoticed? That's presence. When we're fully in something—joy, grief, connection—it leaves a deeper imprint. You're not "wasting time" by feeling deeply. You're expanding your timeline by being awake in it. Some of the most meaningful seasons are short and unforgettable.

5. Mindsight

The ability to understand your inner world—and honor it in others.

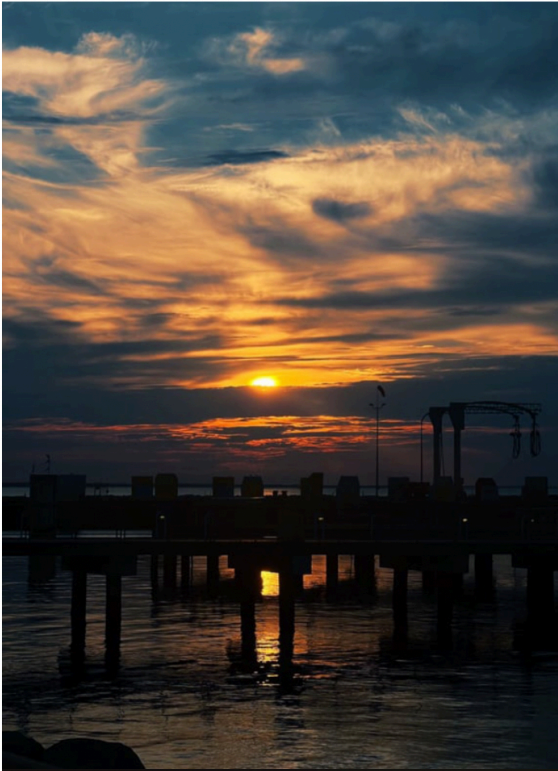
Mindsight is what turns reaction into reflection. It's how you pause before spiraling. How you recognize a boundary before you break. It's what allows you to love people deeply without losing yourself inside them. This isn't detachment—it's discernment. You don't have to fix everyone or figure everything out. You just have to witness the truth when it shows itself.

6. The Velveteen Rabbit Phenomenon

"Once you are Real, you can't become unreal again."

Being "Real" doesn't mean being perfect. It means being worn in. You've loved, you've lost, you've tried again. And maybe the world didn't applaud it. Maybe your softness wasn't always protected. But you chose to feel anyway. And that makes you Real. Not everyone will understand the care you give to what's unfinished. But maybe that's because they've never been held mid-becoming.





There are seasons in life that don't have clear names.
 Not the heartbreak season.
 Not the glow-up.
 Not the rock bottom or the bounce back.
 Just... that strange in-between.
 Where nothing's necessarily wrong—
 but nothing feels fully formed either.
 A stretch. A stir. A shift.
 The early parts of becoming.
 It's the season where you're not who you used to be,
 but you're also not fully standing in who you're becoming.
 You're pouring, you're reaching, you're still showing up—
 but somewhere in there, you feel like a missing person in your own life.
 Not lost.
 Just... not found yet.

There's pressure in the becoming.
 To do more. To be more.
 Even when you're already carrying a lot.
 You may know what you're called to do.
 You may even be living inside the beginnings of your dream.
 And still—fear finds its way in.
 Subtle doubt. Other people's energy.
 Those moments you feel off and don't even know why.
 Sometimes stepping back is necessary.
 But sometimes, it's fear disguised as rest.
 Sometimes it's the quiet way we start pulling away from what scares us the most:
 success. growth. arrival.

What if I fail?
 What if I don't?
 These are the questions that loop when you're standing at the edge of what you prayed for.
 This is the part where people either retreat or leap.
 This is the part where you learn to trust yourself—
 and God—
 enough to keep going even when it's not all clear yet.

If you're in this space, this quiet stretch,
 this in-between of potential and promise—
 you're not crazy.
 You're not lazy.
 You're not lost.
 You're just becoming in real-time.
 Your thoughts might feel scattered.
 You might feel like you're on the edge of everything.
 You might need to come home to yourself for a moment.
 To sit still.
 To regroup.
 To remember who you are and what you're made for.
 This doesn't mean you've lost your way.
 It just means you're not rushing your arrival.
 You're becoming honestly, slowly, intentionally.
 And that's holy ground.

You don't have to be finished to be faithful.
 You don't have to be perfect to be chosen.
 And you don't have to be certain to keep saying yes.
 This stretch you're in?
 It's sacred.
 It's scary.
 And it's shaping you.
 Let it.

There's a strange ache that lives inside me. It's not rooted in lack.
 It's not about wanting more to take—
 It's wanting more to give.
 My life is meaningful. I know that.
 I'm deeply grateful. I feel that.
 But still, there's this quiet, constant tug in my chest—
 like I'm meant to contribute something bigger.
 To become something fuller.
 To meet myself in a future I can almost taste,
 but can't quite reach yet.
 It's not sadness. It's not impatience.
 It's just... the awkwardness of limbo.
 That in-between place where everything is okay—
 but nothing feels finished.
 Where you're content, but not complete.
 Peaceful, but still pacing.
 I'm not unhappy. Actually, I'm really happy.
 Like, genuinely.
 And maybe that's what's throwing me off.
 I'm someone who's been so used to chaos,
 that calm feels unfamiliar.
 And unfamiliarity always brings questions.

Is this it?
 Am I doing enough?
 Am I giving enough?
 Am I even being enough?
 Because there's this soul-level hunger that says:
 "You were built for something more."
 And not more fame, or more money, or more validation—
 but more meaning.
 More expression.
 More pouring out of who I really am.
 Maybe that's what the ache for more is:
 a reminder that I'm still becoming.
 That the kettle hasn't whistled yet,
 but the water is warming.
 That something's brewing beneath the surface.
 And my only job is to stay present while it does.
 It's okay not to know what's next.
 It's okay to feel both full and restless.
 It's okay to be here—exactly where I am—
 and still want to grow beyond it.
 That's not ungrateful.
 That's human.

So I'll sit with the ache.
 Let it move through me instead of shame me.
 Let it stir me instead of still me.
 Because maybe this ache is divine.
 Maybe it's fuel.
 I don't want life to just pass by.
 I want to be my purpose.
 I want to exert my worth.
 And that's what I'm doing.
 I'm coming out. Fort Worth.
 So I guess here I am,
 just trying to ramble on,
 right now I'm lingering
 with something for you to hold on.
 And I don't necessarily know if there is anything.
 Maybe it's one of those things you'll understand.
 Or maybe you won't.
 Maybe I should be satisfied—
 but I'm not going to shame myself for craving more.
 There's always room to want more
 when you know there's more of you left to give.
 So I won't numb the ache.
 I'll let it lead me.
 I want to be more of me.
 And give it to you.
 And that, I think—
 is what I'm here to do.

