

a letter written partly to a friend, partly to a family member, and partly to myself:

By Mariah Bronnee- Age 17

if you ever ask if you can call me to say goodbye because you've decided you're really going to kill yourself, yes. call me. I won't say I forgive you I won't say I love you one last time I will not beg you to stay because if you have to convince someone to stay they're already gone. so I won't ask you not to commit suicide, not to leave me behind because I can't live without you, I will not say think of your family or your friends. and I will not forgive you, you will not leave on good terms with me. but I will write you a story of lilac skies and golden sunrises that will get tangled in your hair making it glow, I will paint you a picture of underwater forests where the moss grows on all sides of the trees and the branches sway gently with the current and if you make ripples in the surface it'll look like the leaves are dancing, I will show you how to use the insomnia, to take the deep violet under your eyes and use it as ink to write poems and songs, I'll teach you that you can write the notes to sound like birds looking out beyond their cage. I'll take you to museums and concerts and try to help you see that people can create beautiful things, not just tear them apart, but I'll also take you to second hand stores and show you how to make something good out of things that you think nobody wants anymore. I will not try to force you to love life and want to keep living, but if you call me, maybe I maybe I can help you understand that happiness is not a decision, happiness is as hollow as a gutted pumpkin, empty inside, an artificial, unwavering smile carved up in front, happiness is as fragile as a porcelain doll, painted teeth and dull eyes and not a single ounce of reality. but you do have to decide that you're worth recovery and that takes time. you're going to relapse and it's going to get bad all over again and it's going to feel hopeless but I can promise you that every time you decide that it'll be okay, you will learn how to make something beautiful out of nothing at all, you'll take a blank piece of paper and use the ashes from the fire that ravaged your life and you'll use them to draw a portrait of the person you want to build yourself into. you'll draw hopes and dreams and plans and you'll learn to create things that people will fall in love with and stories they can relate to. so I can promise that you'll learn not to water flowers that are already dead but to plant ivy that will grow and twist and fill the cracks in the charred walls of your heart until that burned down palace is replaced by nothing but soft leaves and hazy green. i know that people are cruel sometimes, especially to themselves. but i hope i can help you see that you deserve cities and sunrises and oceans and every lovely thing this world has to offer. i will remind you that there are books you haven't read yet, movies you haven't seen, and songs you haven't heard that will decorate the inside of your mind in such beautiful ways. there are people you have not met yet that you will love and who will love you and you will laugh until it hurts. you will cultivate each ethereal thought and one day you'll look back on this moment you feel there's nothing left for you and you will remember that feeling and be perfectly content in knowing you made it. you have not yet experienced all the things that can keep you alive. so I can promise that if you ever ask if you can call to say goodbye, the answer will be yes. without hesitation, without resentment. yes. please. call me. but I won't say goodbye.