



To Those I Love,

### **A Letter from the Heart.**

If I cannot come to see you, or to see you if you come to see me, know that it's not personal; it's never you.

If I try and I fail, it is better to be happy for me that I tried than to be sad or frustrated that I failed. Every attempt, no matter how far I get, is a step I am taking back to you.

If I am able to reach you physically yet cannot meet your eyes, speak, stay or seem to be comfortable in your company, it's not personal; it's never you.

If I try and I fail to be there emotionally, please try to remember that it is because my demons are taking my attention away from you and making me uncomfortable.

If I seem selfish in my behaviour, it is because I am trying so hard not to be selfish. I am trying to find myself and reclaim my mind from my demons so that I can be there, in mind and body, for you.

If I become so uncomfortable to the point my behaviour screams that I want to get away, know that it's not because of you. Sometimes I have to leave in order to redeem myself and to protect you from feeling uncomfortable or from worrying about me quite as much. Sometimes I have to say to myself, "I've done all I can for now. I will try again another day." I will come back to you. If not that day, then another day.

I came to be this way because of life experiences that imprinted into my young and influential brain that certain situations are not safe for me to be in. Years of seeking help and failing to get it meant that the longer I went untreated, the more ingrained my behaviours, thoughts and fears became. By the time someone listened and I did receive help, my demons had become so deep-rooted that even twelve years on, I haven't been able to fix all the things that went so wrong.

Anything that reminds me of those experiences encourages the demons to come forwards, and it often takes all my energy to hold them back until they relent.

And they do relent. It is possible for me to put them in their place and to live life just as me, without my demons. But to bounce back from a time when they got the better of me, from a time they have ruled my life, it's the hardest thing in the world to do. Sometimes it feels like a constant fight. I am told that one approach to recovery is to stop fighting. Yet to stop fighting means to fight against the urge to fight. There is no easy way for me to recover and live the life I want to, and it will take time. It might take weeks, months, or even years. No-one can know how long it will take. Matters of

the brain and mind are complex. All I can do is keep trying. Some days will be better than others.

My mental illnesses do not care for social or personal etiquette or for what I want. They are selfish and they want to be an entity in themselves, to exert themselves vicariously through my body. They demand to be heard and to have control over my mind. They do not like to be ignored.

The level of truth in this is disputed by some who have recovered and others who claim to be experts in the field of mental health; they state that your mental illness is never your identity. They might say that what I am saying in this letter [that my behaviour implies a lack of control or will to overcome, that my mental illness has any identity] is taking a "victim attitude", which is not conducive to recovery. The reality is that accepting your boundaries and working with them and explaining them to those you love is not the same as acting like a victim of your own mind. To act like a victim would be suggested by something more along the lines of the abdication of all responsibility of illness and recovery and disregard for any understanding, or attempted understanding, of the illness.

I have boundaries, but I am not a victim.

I have written this to you because you are one of a select group of people who have loved and supported me through the tough times. You have also seen me at my best and therefore have the belief and knowledge that I can be fully present and safe in life, no matter where I am. Your belief in me gives me hope and faith and reminds me that I can get back to living my life as I was, with you as an important and regular feature, enjoying your company and love and sharing days and life experiences with nothing to get in the way. No-one can understand how much I am missing that freedom right now.

I am more grateful than anyone can ever know for those people who love and have loved me. I am not an easy person, and knowing that makes me appreciate and love you all the more for the fact that you have accepted me as a part of your life, whether directly or by association.

Thank you for celebrating the good times with me, and for supporting me through the difficult times. I hope one day to be able to return the kindness, stability and love you have given me when you also need it most.

With much love,

*Me x*