

## A Letter: Hayley Lewis

I am formidable.

I rise.

I shake off everything that doesn't nourish me.

I divest myself of trauma bonds.

I surge beyond your expectations.

I surmount obstacles self-made and imposed.

I transcend the abuse.

I eclipse the limitations of self-doubt.

I triumph over all that shaped and formed me,

and oppressed

and abused

and mistreated

and bullied

and underestimated me.

I am not merely what you made me anymore. I have gone past you both and left you with your regret.

When you punished me physically and emotionally for imagined transgressions you couldn't crush me entirely- not permanently. A spark of me remained, determined to emerge.

I was damaged: bloodied, confused, ashamed and terrified. I thought I was unloved and unlovable. I was wrong, and more importantly, YOU were wrong. All the ways you mistreated me, all the abuse and neglect didn't beat me. I'm still here waving, not drowning.

Dysfunction and pain flow through generations like a polluted river soaking family until someone is willing to feel that pain. Until someone is willing to swim through it, turn it over in their hands and taste it, look it in the eye. I'm that someone.

I have found the tools to heal. Keeping those tools sharpened is tiring and daunting but I am using these tools to sculpt and reshape the new me. Your tumultuous parenting felt formidable for so many years. It turns out that I am the formidable one. After a lifetime of seeing you as scary, intimidating, and unbeatable, I realise that I am the one to be reckoned with.

I have broken the cycle of generational family trauma. I have become patient, enduring, content. I am passing formidable traits of compassion, strength, and tenacity to others, and surviving each day without inflicting pain.

My core will always be tender to the touch, but that is another formidable quality. Time is not refundable, so I stopped wearing that coat of lies that you taught me about myself. I fashioned a cloak of softness, acceptance, and humour to wrap around myself.

This letter isn't for the listeners- it doesn't need to be read. It is for me. The power, the goodness, the forward motion, is in the act of writing, of saying, of truth telling.

I have become undone, unravelled, unmade. Slowly, painfully, with tentative hope and joy I have become myself.

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