

Dear B,

From the very first time I met you - your small self all alone at a big round table in a large, large room - I loved you and you were my favorite.

We're not supposed to have favorites, us therapists, but that is impossible. A little silly, really, because some people just pull heartstrings in ways that others don't.

You have one of my heartstrings.

Why? I'm not sure. Maybe your sadness reminded me of mine. Maybe my spirit recognized kindred. It doesn't really matter. It simply was and is.

We have a connection that is quite distinct and other-worldly. After nearly a decade of therapeutic practice, I can tell you this is unusual. There were days when I would come get you from class and you would tear up at the sight of me, saying that you were literally just wishing for us to meet. Eventually, there were times when you could predict my response to your pain and that of others. As you have matured, we've shared moments where we thought and spoke the same thing in the same exact moment.

How is that possible? It remains a mystery to me how we can be so inherently different (geographically, racially, socio-economically, spiritually) and so remarkably alike. Perhaps this is true for more people in our lives than we realize.

I cannot tell you all of this because of the nature of the client-therapist relationship, but what I felt back then remains true today.

We are nearly six years from that first meeting and you will graduate high school in a few months. God, I will miss you! Will I even know myself as counselor without you? (And does that make me an enmeshed and terribly unhealthy therapist...?)

Screw it. It makes me human.

Here it what I wish I could tell you.

You are loved. Infinitely. Beyond reason and unbreakably.

You have never been alone. Even in the moments when the inside of you screamed and no one heard, in the moments of the quiet and in the moments of the tears and loss late at night - you were never alone.

When your dad died.

When you were in desperate need of a respite in the middle of the school day.

When life felt chaotic and disorderly and everything in you began to panic.

You were never alone.

There is One who knows you better than I know you, better than you know yourself. He has been whispering to me about you this whole time - telling me in small ways what you need, drawing me to say a quick hello in a hopeless moment. I hope one day my influence helps to bring you to Him. He will be there whenever you're ready.

You are undeniably, inextricably, overwhelmingly and forever lovely. Though you are beautiful by social convention, your real beauty is bound in your spirit. It is in the way you see beneath the surface. It is in the way you hurt alongside a friend. It is how you were made. And though you have suffered many losses in your life, there is nothing and no one that can take *this* from you.

We will say good-bye soon and it will feel like a loss. But that won't really be true for either of us. After all, you have one of my heart strings. When you miss me, all you have to do is tug on it. I will feel it and I will send a little something back to you - a little peace, a little hope, a little love.