

Tarah Rhelland
THE UNFILTERED



WOMAN'S GUIDE
TO LETTING GO

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This book was written from a place of deep truth and pain, and is offered to anyone who needs a reason to stay.

A book for the woman who almost didn't make it.

And a prayer for the one who still might not.

Sections:

1. **The Ache of Holding On**

What we carry long after it's gone. The illusion of safety. The weight of what we think we deserve.

2. **The Shame No One Sees**

The private blame. The silent bargaining. The stories we spin to make abandonment make sense.

3. **The Silence After Goodbye**

Not peace. Not closure. The quiet where your own voice finally comes back to you.

4. **The Brutality of Becoming**

Raw, ugly, gorgeous moments where we grow *without applause*.

5. **The Myth of Moving On**

You don't "move on." You move deeper. You become more. You carry less.

6. **The Rebirth That Isn't Pretty**

Healing isn't a montage. It's slow. Sacred. Often invisible.

7. **The Woman Who Came Back**

Yourself. Your knowing. Your voice. The truth that *never left you*.

Dedication

For the woman who almost didn't make it.
Who screamed into her pillow.
Who begged God to take her in the quiet.
Who truly believed the world would be better without her.

This is for the moment you were invisible —
and *still* showed up.

For the one who was thrown away.
Lied to. Cheated on. Silenced. Mocked. Replaced.
For the one who gave too much, too long, to the wrong people —
and still had the heart to try again.

This is for you.

For the night I almost left this earth,
and the friend who showed up at 1:00 a.m.
Because of a delayed flight.
Because she needed to sleep.
Because **divine timing is real even when you don't believe in anything anymore.**

For the woman who's been told she's too broken.
Too loud.
Too wild.
Too much.

You are not too much.
You are **becoming.**

And if no one has ever looked you in the eye and said it:
I love you.
I see you.
And I'm still here — so you can be too.

This isn't a goodbye.

It's a beginning.

1. The Ache of Holding On

Letting go is not the hard part.

Holding on is.

Holding on to the version of him you invented in your head.

Holding on to the words you wish he'd said.

Holding on to the fantasy that if you were just a little less, or a little more,
he might have stayed.

You grip things long after they've rotted —

because no one ever taught you that love can leave a bruise
and still not be your fault.

You hold on because you want to believe people mean what they say.

That they'll come back.

That maybe this time, it was just a miscommunication.

That maybe *you're* the one who's too sensitive.

That maybe if you just explain it better...

You hold on,

because you don't know who you are
without the weight of waiting.

But here's what they never told you:

You can grieve what you never had.

And you can walk away from someone
even if they never said goodbye.

Letting go isn't weakness.

**It's the sacred art of choosing yourself
before someone else decides you don't matter.**

The Ache of Holding On (Reflection)

No one teaches you how to let go of something that never fully belonged to you.
They just tell you to "move on."

But how do you move on
from someone who made you feel chosen
then suddenly didn't?

How do you forget the way he looked at you
when he wanted you —
and pretend it didn't shatter you
when he stopped?

They don't talk about that part.

The part where you're stuck with all the pieces
and no one even admits it was real.

The part where you go silent in your friendships
because they're tired of hearing his name —
but you're still living inside the wreckage of what he never said.

The part where you lie to yourself
just to survive the nights he doesn't come back.

But here's the truth:

You are not crazy.
You are not dramatic.
You are not weak for missing someone
who made you feel something
and then left you to drown in it alone.

You're just a woman
who wanted to be loved honestly.
And that is never something to apologize for.

Mirror Prompt:

What are you still carrying that was never yours to hold?

The Ache of Holding On (Closing)

You don't need to rise today.

You don't need to glow or grow or grind.

You don't need a plan.

You don't need a mantra.

You don't need to pretend this doesn't hurt.

All you need
is to stop blaming yourself
for loving with your whole heart.

Even if it broke you.

Even if it wasn't returned.

Even if it left you screaming into a silent sky
with no answer but your own breath.

The ache means you're alive.

The ache means you *felt*.

The ache means you *still can*.

And somewhere beneath it all —
under the dust, under the shame, under the apology that never came —
something else is starting.

Not healing.

Not hope.

Something more ancient than both.

A knowing.

You are not broken.

You are not weak.

You are the fire someone tried to put out
and failed.

2. The Shame No One Sees

It doesn't come all at once.
The break.

It starts as a whisper —
a missed text, a broken promise you pretend didn't sting.
You laugh it off. You make a joke about it.
You keep moving.

But somewhere between
"I'm just tired"
and
"I don't want to be here anymore,"
something starts peeling.

Not with drama.
Not with fire.
But with quiet.

Like old paint curling off the wall
in a house no one visits anymore.

You don't scream.
You don't cry in public.
You just go a little quieter each day.

Until one morning you wake up
and silence feels safer than breathing.

Because the weight of pretending is heavier than the grief itself.

Because the thought of being truly seen
— *seen in the raw mess of it* —
feels worse than being invisible.

So you become
the woman who texts back with hearts and exclamation points.
The woman who posts sunsets and motivation quotes.
The woman who makes everyone feel okay
because she cannot bear to show them she is not.

But the shame isn't in the sadness.

The shame is in thinking
you have to go through it alone
because your grief isn't *convenient* for anyone else.

Let that fall away now.

Let it peel off. Let it crack.

You do not owe this world your composure.

The Shame No One Sees (Reflection)

There is a secret kind of sadness
that doesn't scream.
It sets the table. It puts on makeup.
It asks how *you're* doing.

It's the kind of sadness that still shows up for work,
still folds the laundry,
still remembers your birthday.

It's the kind of sadness that doesn't cancel plans —
it *hosts them*.

Because it knows:
if you unravel in front of people,
you will make them uncomfortable.
And that will only deepen the ache.

So you carry it.
Like a porcelain cup no one notices is cracked —
until one day, it shatters
because you dared to pour something warm into it.

You don't want to die.

You just don't want to feel like this anymore.
And that distinction?
Matters.

Because the truth is:
you're not broken beyond repair.
You're just exhausted
from hiding how close the edge is.

You don't need saving.
You need someone to say:

I see you.
Exactly as you are.
And you are allowed to stop pretending.

Mirror Prompt:

Where are you pretending to be okay because you're afraid of being a burden?

The Shame No One Sees (Closing)

You don't owe this world your silence.

And you don't owe anyone
the most curated version of your pain.

Let it peel.
Let it crack.

You are not falling apart.
You are *being revealed*.

And underneath all that polite grief,
there is a woman still breathing —
and breath is proof of possibility.

Even now.
Even here.
Even if you don't believe it yet.

3. The Silence After Goodbye

Goodbye isn't always a moment.
Sometimes, it's a slow fade.
A message left on "read."
A shift in tone.
A conversation that drifts into never again.

And sometimes,
it's silence that answers where love used to live.

No doors slammed.
No final speech.
Just absence.

And you're left to grieve what never properly ended
while the world tells you to be grateful he didn't make a scene.

But silence?
That is a scene.
And you're in every frame,
alone.

At first, you fill the silence with noise —
scrolling, working, apologizing.
You try to talk yourself into numbness.
You try to explain it away to your friends.

You tell them: *It's fine. It wasn't even a thing.*
Even though you replay every message
like it was scripture.

But nothing is louder than the silence
that follows a connection you believed in
— even for a moment —
being yanked away like it meant nothing.

And the shame creeps in:
Was I delusional? Was it all in my head?
Why didn't I see it coming?

You start to shrink.

Start to question your intuition.

Start to believe maybe this is just how you're meant to be treated.

But let me say this now:

Someone else's silence

is not proof of your unworthiness.

It's proof of *their* inability to speak in the language of your depth.

And it hurts — God, it hurts —

but it's not your fault they were never fluent in truth.

The Silence After Goodbye (Reflection)

It's wild, isn't it?

How someone can be a part of your everyday
and then just...

stop.

No explanation.

No apology.

Just gone.

You wait a day. Then three. Then a week.

You scroll to see if they're active.

You think, *Maybe they're going through something.*

You blame yourself.

You rehearse a message you'll never send.

You tell yourself you'll "be the bigger person,"

but it still lives under your skin —

that sting of being left without ceremony.

There is no ritual for the kind of loss

that doesn't come with funeral flowers or public grief.

Only the quiet.

Only the echo.

Only you,

trying to piece together meaning from a silence

that was never meant to be yours to translate.

And maybe that's the hardest part:

You still have so much to say.

And no one to hear it.

But maybe...

maybe you are not meant to speak it to them.

Maybe the silence left behind

is a clearing

for you to finally listen

to *your own voice*.

Not the one begging to be chosen.
The one that remembers
you were always worth staying for.

Mirror Prompt:

If you spoke to yourself the way you wish they had... what would you say?

The Silence After Goodbye (Closing)

You keep thinking closure will come
from their return.

From their regret.

From the perfect sentence
that will stitch the wound closed.

But closure isn't a gift they give you.

It's a choice you make
when you finally decide
their silence isn't worth echoing anymore.

You don't need to be louder.

You just need to be *honest*.

With yourself.

And when you speak again —
even if it's just a whisper —
make sure the first thing you say is:

"I didn't deserve that."

And the next thing?

"I'm still here."

4. The Brutality of Becoming

No one tells you that becoming
will feel like dying.

Not all at once —
but piece by piece.
Layer by layer.
Every lie you believed about yourself
peeling off like skin that doesn't fit anymore.

You want transformation to feel holy.
Clean.
Powerful.

But it feels more like grief.
Like guilt.
Like shame wrapped in silence.

It feels like sitting in the same room you once shared with him,
and realizing you made yourself small
so someone else could feel bigger.

It feels like deleting the messages,
then digging through the trash folder
because you're not ready yet.
It feels like crying in the shower
so no one hears.

Becoming doesn't feel like power.
Not at first.

It feels like loss.
Of identity.
Of illusion.
Of comfort.
Of *her* — the version of you who tolerated just a little too much
because you didn't know your worth yet.

This is not self-help.
This is *self-unraveling*.

And it's ugly.

It's sacred.

It's lonely.

It's yours.

The Brutality of Becoming (Reflection)

You're not who you were
—but you don't yet trust who you're becoming.

You feel exposed.
Not empowered.

Like a caterpillar half-out of her skin,
mid-molt, mid-tear,
not yet winged,
but no longer protected.

This isn't transformation like the movies.
There's no glowing light.
No music swelling.

It's just you.
In the quiet.
Bleeding through the bandages of all the versions of yourself you had to abandon just to survive.

You miss her, don't you?

The girl who still believed.
The one who loved blindly.
The one who smiled too easily.

She was naïve.
But she was pure.

And now you're not sure if what's growing in her place
is *better*
or just harder.

But here's what no one tells you:

Even when the becoming feels brutal,
even when it strips you of softness,
even when the world calls you bitter or jaded or too much —

it's not bitterness.
It's boundaries.

It's not jaded.

It's wisdom.

It's not too much.

It's finally enough.

This part hurts.

But it also *hardens you into truth*.

And that truth?

Is the beginning of power.

Mirror Prompt:

What parts of yourself are you mourning... and what are they making room for?

The Brutality of Becoming (Closing)

You thought becoming would feel like arrival.
It doesn't.

It feels like walking barefoot through the ruins
of every version of yourself
you once begged someone to love.

But every step you take —
every truth you don't deny,
every boundary you reinforce,
every time you choose silence over begging,
stillness over chasing,
yourself over survival —

you are building something
they can never take from you again.

Not armor.

Alchemy.

The world tried to break you.
But you...
You're the one who dared to stay.

Not because it was easy.
But because *you remembered something no one else could give you:*

You.

5. The Myth of Moving On

There's this lie we tell women:

That one day, you'll wake up and forget.

That healing has a finish line.

That you'll "move on" — like grief is a bus you missed, and another one's coming soon.

But the truth is...

You don't move on.

You move *with*.

You carry the ache in your bones.

The lesson in your gut.

The memory in your skin.

Not because you're broken —

but because *you felt deeply*

and the world didn't give you a clean ending.

There's no parade for your pain.

No gold star for surviving what almost killed your spirit.

You just keep walking.

And one day,

you realize you haven't thought about him in hours.

Then days.

Then weeks.

And when his name comes up,

it doesn't split your ribs open anymore.

It just... exists.

In the past.

Where it always belonged.

That isn't moving on.

That's reclaiming space

from the places your hurt used to live.

It's sacred.

It's slow.

And it never looks the way people expect.

The Myth of Moving On (Reflection)

There's no finish line to this.

You don't wake up one day
with sunshine in your bones
and no trace of the heartbreak that hollowed you.

You just get better
at not picking the scab.

You start remembering your favorite songs
without them being *your* songs.

You stop checking the timestamp
on photos you no longer scroll through.

You no longer write drafts you'll never send.
You no longer rehearse the moment he realizes he lost you.

You stop needing to prove anything.

That's the quiet revolution.

When healing stops being
about being seen
and starts being
about simply *being*.

You will still have days that ache.
You will still flinch at old echoes.
You will still remember what it cost you.

But you will also
walk taller.
Laugh louder.
Hold yourself better.

And you will know — without question —
that it wasn't about *moving on*.

It was about coming back to yourself
without shame.

Mirror Prompt:

What would “healing” look like if you didn’t have to pretend you were over it?

The Myth of Moving On (Closing)

You're not behind.

You're not broken.

You're not weak for remembering.

You're still allowed to miss him
and still never want him back.

You're still allowed to feel sadness
and still be *healing*.

You're allowed to grow with grief still in your pocket.

Not because you haven't moved on —
but because you've learned:

Grief isn't a wound.

It's a doorway.

And you've walked through it.

6. The Rebirth That Isn't Pretty

Everyone celebrates the return.

The “new you.”

The glow-up.

The comeback.

But no one talks about what it costs.

No one talks about the mornings you still wake up
expecting pain

because your nervous system doesn't trust the quiet yet.

No one talks about how your smile comes back

but not all the way —

just enough to pass.

No one talks about the body aches,

the soft panic,

the strange sense of being someone new

with no idea how to live in her skin yet.

Rebirth isn't beautiful.

It's disorienting.

You've unlearned the patterns.

But you haven't practiced the peace.

So when things are calm,

you assume they're about to break again.

This is the part where most people

slip back into what hurt.

Because they know how to survive chaos.

But not how to receive quiet love.

So they run.

Or sabotage.

Or chase shadows of the past

just to feel like themselves again.

But you...
You are not going back.
Even if this part is messy.
Even if you still forget you're whole.

This is still the becoming.
Just softer now.
More sacred.
Less loud.

And one day soon,
you'll recognize yourself again
in the mirror
without flinching.

The Rebirth That Isn't Pretty (Reflection)

You think you're healed
until something small breaks you again.

A song.

A scent.

A sentence that sounds like him.

And suddenly, you're crying on the bathroom floor
because the version of you who survived
still doesn't feel safe in her own skin.

You thought coming back to life
would feel like a celebration.

But it feels more like
trying to fit into a dress you outgrew
without realizing you ever changed sizes.

You are not who you were.

But you're still mourning her.

That girl who made excuses for him.
Who answered every late-night call.
Who believed love meant endurance.

She didn't know better.
She didn't know her worth.

But she kept breathing
even when it would've been easier to stop.

Honor her.
Not for what she tolerated.
But for how she *never let go of the thread*.

Even when her hands were bleeding.

You are the result of her refusal to die.

And now you get to be
what she never thought was possible:

Free.

Mirror Prompt:

What parts of your past self do you miss — and which ones are you ready to release with love?

The Rebirth That Isn't Pretty (Closing)

This is not a highlight reel.
This is not the “after” photo.

This is the quiet middle —
the space between survival and joy.

It's awkward.
It's fragile.
It's holy.

And even if you don't feel strong yet,
you are **no longer someone who settles.**

You're no longer waiting to be chosen.
You're no longer building a life around someone else's absence.

You are not the same.

And thank God.

Because the world didn't need another perfect woman.

It needed *you*.
Exactly as you are now.

Unfinished.
Untamed.
Unapologetically here.

7. The Woman Who Came Back

She doesn't glow.
She burns.

Not with anger.
With knowing.

The kind of knowing that comes
from walking through fire
without asking anyone to carry her.

She doesn't need to post about it.
She doesn't need to prove anything.
She doesn't need him to say, "*I messed up.*"

She knows he did.

And she knows it had nothing to do with her worth.

The woman who came back
doesn't shrink in rooms that once felt too big.
She doesn't audition for the bare minimum.
She doesn't flinch at quiet.

She *is* the quiet.

And not the kind that waits to be chosen —
the kind that **chooses herself**
before the world even gets a say.

This isn't confidence.
It's *clarity*.

This isn't revenge.
It's *reclamation*.

She still has the scars.
She still has the softness.
But now, she has **sovereignty**.

She knows how far she fell.
And she knows what it took to rise.

So when they ask where she's been,
she doesn't explain.

She just says:

“Home.”

The Woman Who Came Back (Reflection)

You don't become invincible.

You still get triggered.

You still cry when no one's looking.

You still doubt your worth on the bad days.

But you stop giving those days the final word.

Because now you know:

You are the storm and the shelter.

You are the prayer and the answer.

You are the ending and the origin story.

They will still try to reduce you.

Life will still try to test you.

The world will still ask you to shrink.

And sometimes —

yes — you'll fall.

But not like before.

Because now, when you fall,

you rise with memory.

Memory of every time you thought you couldn't survive —
and did.

Memory of the version of you
who begged to disappear —
and didn't.

And most of all,
memory of the one moment you least expected it —
when something beautiful found you.

A song.

A stranger's kindness.

A golden slant of light through your window.

And you thought,
“*I would’ve missed this.*”

That’s why you stay.

Not for the happy ending.

Not for the applause.

But for the *unexpected beauty*
that only visits those who keep walking.

The Woman Who Came Back (Closing)

You will never be untouchable.
But you will always be unstoppable.

You know now:
the world may try to break you —
but you were *built to return*.

To yourself.
To the light.
To the part of you
that never stopped whispering:

“Get up. One more time.”

And when the world asks what made you keep going,
you’ll say—

“Because I remembered there are still sunsets I haven’t seen.”

“Because I still laugh like fire when it’s real.”

“Because I promised the girl inside me I wouldn’t leave her behind.”

Because *some days are just too beautiful to miss*.

And you were never meant to miss them.

Benediction

For the woman who made it to the end:

This was never about fixing what was broken.
It was about *unearthing* what the world buried.
The girl who dreamed too loud.
Loved too hard.
Laughed before she was allowed to.

She didn't vanish.
She was hidden.
By survival. By silence. By shame.

But now you remember her.

And remembering is how you rise.

You don't need to fix yourself.
You don't need to find yourself.
You just need to *come back*
to the one who stayed
even when you didn't want to.

She's still here.
The girl who believed.
The girl who loved without flinching.
The girl who broke,
and bled,
and still looked up.

Bless her.

Bless her ache.
Bless her anger.
Bless her laughter when it finally returns.
Bless her softness that survived the storm.

And when the dark comes again —
because it always does —
may she remember:

She is not lost.
She is not alone.
She is not done.

She is the woman who came back
again

and again
and again.

And every time?

She brought more light with her.
