

To Michie,

Hi. I hope you're well. I hope you're still making writing a habit, just getting your thoughts out on paper —digital or physical. I still don't know who said it, but there is more room for your feelings outside than in. And you have always been such a sensitive little potato, so let it out.

I hope you still write until the weight lifts from your shoulders, the tears clear from your eyes and the heaviness in your heart becomes comical. I hope writing still alleviates “the pain of existing,” as you so dramatically call it.

I know how much you enjoyed Teju Cole's *Eight Letters to a Young Writer*, and you will be pleased to hear that I've put a lot of what he teaches into practice. It's also why I'm writing you a letter now. Gone is the awkwardness, gone is the fear of being vulnerable, gone is the doubt that *writer* and Michie belong in the same sentence. It's been great, and I wish the same for you. I am you, so this is your future, but I think you understand what I mean.

There is also honesty here. I don't beat around the bush anymore. I say what needs to be said, about whatever my subject matter is. I almost lash out at the world using my words, our words. And if I had known how to do this earlier, it would have saved us lots of therapy. But anyway, the therapy is part of the story and I'm grateful for it.

I'm writing to you to talk about what stories have come to mean to you, to me, to us. I hope that this letter encourages you to continue on this path of self-discovery and meaning-making. What started as a childlike curiosity has

developed into a fundamental need. You need to write to thrive, and that thought makes me exceedingly proud. I'm also proud of you for joining things like workshops. You once hated the idea, and now look at you. Look at how the opportunities roll out before you like a lush, brand-new carpet.

You have finally learned that you deserve to tell stories. You always put too much pressure on yourself, censoring your ideas and trying so hard to conform to whatever notions of "storyteller" or "author" you had come across and internalised. Now your eyes are open and you recognise the imminent, almost existential imperative to be exactly who you are as a writer, friend, student, sister, dancer, poet and daughter. Good on you, mama.

The road here has been so rewarding. It's an honour to get to know your voice, hearing it grow louder and louder. From a soft, almost indistinguishable howl-like wind blowing through the corridors of our home, to a terrible storm, roaring and echoing through time. You believe that you deserve to storm now, and I have found real peace in that.

Now, I must urge you, because we're so prone to forget, to always remember to spend time with people. They are your muse, your inspiration. I can't see you writing about anything besides relationships because I know how they have always called to you. You can't learn about envy or love or anguish or resentment from the safety of your room. Please, I beg you, be brave. Get to know people and let them into your world. I'm writing this in the hopes that you will start us down that road, because I am yet to open up to anyone I know.

The experiences I have stored in my memory and imagination are inexhaustible, yes, but it wouldn't hurt to have more. What does your next breakup look and feel like? What words come to mind when you think of the next immigration officer who makes you feel welcome? What do you have to say about the new

recipes you're setting out to try? I want to know—nay, I need to know. So go out, do boring or interesting things, and write all about them to me. I will be eternally grateful.

Michie, you have long been my dearest friend. I value the time and energy you are putting into this craft. I am happy to know that I as an individual, as a storyteller, can articulate myself. This inner world can be made accessible to those beyond my immediate vicinity. I can share myself in a way that some people can't. And the beauty of it all is that maybe they don't have to. Maybe, if you live honestly and openly, unbridled by shame, fear or selfishness, your voice can speak for many. There is so much overlap within the human experience that I can be certain that what you have to say is exactly what someone out there needs to hear.

I hope this letter has been as comforting for you to read as it was for me to write.

Take care,  
Michie.