there’s always less left than you thought

you ever decide to save a little bit for later?

maybe it’s a joint.

maybe it’s a blunt.

you’re smoking, feeling good, and somewhere in the middle of it you think,

“you know what? i don’t need to finish this.”

“i’m gonna put it out.”

“future me will appreciate this.”

so you carefully tap it out.

set it somewhere safe.

and in your mind, you have saved a substantial amount.

not scraps.

not a struggle portion.

a respectable little second session.

then your high starts wearing off.

time passes.

you remember what you saved.

you go back to light it and look down like...

what the hell is this?

this is not what i put out.

this is barely anything.

this almost wasn’t worth saving.

somehow, while it was lit, it felt like there was so much more left.

and i think relationships are like that.

not because love is a blunt.

although, depending on the relationship, both can make you hungry, confused, and weirdly forgiving.

but because things often look fuller while they are still burning.

when you are actively loving each other, talking, flirting, checking in, making plans, touching, laughing, and paying attention, the relationship feels abundant.

it feels strong.

established.

like there is plenty there.

so you start thinking,

“we’re good.”

“this is solid.”

“i don’t have to do so much.”

“we can coast for a little while.”

you put the relationship down believing you have saved enough connection to come back to later.

but connection does not always sit still.

you return and realize there is less left than you thought.

the conversations got shorter.

the affection became automatic.

the inside jokes stopped getting new material.

date night became watching something neither of you was particularly interested in while looking at separate phones.

you still love each other.

probably.

but the thing you assumed was safely waiting has quietly burned down to almost nothing.

not because someone cheated.

not because there was one dramatic betrayal.

not because the relationship was secretly terrible.

sometimes neglect is painfully ordinary.

it is assuming tomorrow will feel like today without doing anything to carry today into tomorrow.

it is believing that because somebody knows you love them, they no longer need to feel it.

it is mistaking history for intimacy.

we have been together for years.

we have survived things.

we know each other.

we are comfortable.

all of that matters.

but none of it automatically keeps the flame going.

a relationship can have deep roots and still become dry.

it can be real and still be underfed.

it can be full of love and strangely empty of attention.

that is what people miss when they say relationships take work.

“work” makes it sound miserable.

like romance is a group project and somebody refuses to answer the emails.

but sometimes the work is simply keeping the thing lit.

asking a question you do not already know the answer to.

looking at the person instead of just existing near them.

touching them with intention.

doing something slightly inconvenient because it would make them feel considered.

making a new memory instead of repeatedly discussing old ones.

saying,

“i still choose you,”

in ways that do not require those exact words.

because love cannot survive forever on what you felt six months ago.

you cannot keep withdrawing warmth from a moment you are no longer feeding.

and you cannot put the flame out every time life gets busy, then expect the same amount to be waiting whenever you decide you are ready again.

sometimes you come back and realize your partner has been sitting in the cold.

sometimes they stopped asking.

sometimes they adjusted to receiving less.

sometimes they built a whole private life around the absence of what you both used to create together.

and by the time you notice, you are staring at the emotional equivalent of a tiny, sad roach, wondering how this is all that remains of something that once felt generous.

the irritating part is that relationships often feel safest right before we start taking them for granted.

you finally know they are not leaving.

you finally stop performing.

you finally relax.

and some relaxation is good.

necessary, even.

nobody wants to audition for love every day.

but there is a difference between feeling secure and becoming careless.

security says,

“i trust that this relationship can hold me.”

carelessness says,

“this relationship will hold itself.”

it will not.

people change.

needs change.

desire changes.

life keeps introducing new stress, grief, boredom, responsibility, insecurity, and versions of ourselves neither person has met yet.

you have to keep learning the person you claim to know.

you have to keep adding something to the fire.

not constantly.

not desperately.

not like one quiet week means the relationship is dying.

but deliberately.

because there is always less left than you thought.

less patience.

less novelty.

less unspoken understanding.

less stored-up affection than it felt like you had when everything was warm.

that does not mean love is fragile.

it means love is alive.

living things require attention.

so light it again.

send the text.

plan the date.

ask the real question.

say the affectionate thing before it turns into something you only think after they fall asleep.

do not wait until the relationship feels nearly gone to become impressed by how good it once was.

keep the flame going while there is still enough there to catch.