

Open Letter to Albert French

Friday, February 21, 2025, 1:00 PM EST

Entitled: Shadyside

Dearest Albert,

I hope this letter finds you well. I'm in Virginia now—how the tides have shifted since we last spoke. Back then, thousands of miles stretched between us, an ocean of distance and time. Now, winter has tightened its grip around me. The week brought a snowfall so heavy that have now bound me to this place; the world outside silenced beneath its weight. And so, I am left with time, an eerie silence, and with thoughts of you.

Our last conversation lingers in my memory, clear as spring in 2010—but that is not where I wish to begin. In the eye of my mind, I still envision the way your words crackled like embers, warming something deep within me, setting a fire I so desperately needed.

To this day, I carry the weight of your words—not as a burden, but as a gift, a compass guiding me forward, reminding me of the power that lives in a well-told story. But the echo of those words carries a shadow, too: the lingering ache of being misunderstood and the hush of a door closing behind you—though you swore it was I who left it ajar.

Minutes bled into hours, months into years, and still, time drifts on. Yet I remain, tangled in the question of why you let your stubbornness cast me aside, as if those long evenings—unraveling my literary voice, spinning dreams of London book signings you so vividly anticipated, whispering conviction into the quiet—meant nothing at all. As if the glow of the candlelight you always insisted upon was never meant to last.

It was not fair—but then, neither is this life. I suppose the bitterness of the hand you were dealt turned you cold long ago, made you see betrayal in places where there was only circumstance. My world had already shattered beneath the weight of an abusive marriage, yet after the unraveling of our communication, you never offered me a fair shake, never granted me the benefit of the doubt, never once let me tell you what truly happened.

I was not the one who left the door open—he tore it from its hinges, slipping through shadows, deceiving in whispers. This was beyond my control, a storm I did not summon but one I was forced to weather. The depth of my sorrow, the quiet violence of that season, is something you could never begin to fathom—nor will I pretend to know the silent weight you carry, the wounds I never see.

Still, I will not sugarcoat it—the things he told you were nothing but lies. He was obsessive, controlling, a master of manipulation. And when you entered my life, I knew in the marrow of my bones that our connection was ordained by the very God you claim you cannot wait on.

And so, the ink still flows, even if the story remains unfinished.

Sincere Regards,

Terry A. O'Neal