

*"Dear Soul Keeper, I'm actually going to give up smoking this time."*

*"Dear Soul Keeper, I wonder how much money is too much money to spend on chocolate-covered pretzels..."*

*"Dear Soul Keeper, I. Am. At. Breaking. Point!"*

*"Dear Soul Keeper, I smoked so much last night."*

I view my various journals like the Doctor from Doctor Who; each new one is a regeneration into something physically different but staying the same in essence. Somewhere along the line I started to refer to it as my Soul Keeper.

Between the pages of my ribbon-bound book has become a place free from judgment or criticism (at least from others, anyway), it's a place where I can moan and scheme and celebrate, it's a place where I'm free. I've come to realise that, as the only person who reads and ~~obsessively rereads~~ my journal, I'm inadvertently my own Soul Keeper; there's something quite beautiful in that, no?

When I die, my sister is under strict instructions to find my diaries and burn them all without reading a single page (like a Soul Power of Attorney, if you will). Does my soul burn with it? Surely not? My soul is made from more than just ink on a page, and if there's anything that *InAMonth* has shown me, it's the myriad means of soul expression. In the birdsong's melody, in the stitches on a seam, in the strokes of paint, meticulous and smooth.

It's also true that our souls are more than our output, right? That they play in the mundane and act as Arachne: weaving and spinning a web from everyday moments. I want my soul to be colourful, messy, and kind. I want my life to be *soulful* - I don't want the Clean Girl Aesthetic with beige bedding, *don't smudge the glass*, and, ugh, *didn't you wear that last week?!* I want a kaleidoscope of Soul that's ever changing and always growing: Weetbix crumbs next to half completed homework; pebbles inside muddy boots while my hand warms another's; I'll even take the tears if it means I can keep the whiskers my cat seems to shed in abundance.

I want to have *so much* Soul that I can give you a piece too. Here, have my metaphor, but don't take it on an empty stomach. I want my friend's souls to spill over and mix in with mine like overflowing elderflower cordial and clinking ice. I want to be inconvenienced by sweltering souls, so much that we must strip off, bare all, and embrace every pore and crevice for better or worse. I want to live in a world with sprawling souls that grow skyscraper-tall, enough to shade a city, and bear a plethora of fruit, enough to nourish a nation.

A melody, a spider's web, a kaleidoscope, a sleepy breakfast, a cool drink, a weather warning, an orchard of trees, and a piece of writing with muddled metaphors.

*"Dear Soul Keeper, what is a soul? That ultimate quandary is not mine to answer, at least not yet, all I know is that, in you, dear friend, mine is guarded well."*