

November 19th, 2025.

Dear Deborah J.J. Lee,

Hi! If you're wondering why you're receiving a letter from a stranger, that's because you have been chosen as the author that I want to write a letter to. Which, by the way, will be entered in a contest for a cash prize, so fingers crossed. Wait, don't click away just yet, I'm not that shallow. You're also receiving this letter because your graphic novel, "In Limbo", has helped me. And I mean, *actually* helped.

Okay, the illustrations. I could go on a long tangent about how gorgeous each stroke is, how vibrant and immersive each monochromatic blue and white was, rendered flawlessly yet radiating with something that doesn't have to force you to remember. It just sticks in your mind's eye like an addictive sweet, and the only one that could satisfy the sweet tooth. Yet, even though you can easily recall it in your mind's eye, that's not enough. The panels of the graphic novel stick to the crevices of your brain, always an itch that you can never quite scratch. No, I don't care if I've already read the book in God knows how many times, I want to look at the pretty pictures again. Especially the part where the flowers start to bloom as they go gallivanting across the city? A blessing for my sore, sore eyes.

But it's not just beautiful.

It's not stylised in a cartoon-ish depiction, but rather, painstakingly fashioned to where it's like looking at a mirror of our world, the smallest details in the dimples of a smile to the folds of a blanket sprawled lazily across the spreadsheet. The floor itself is given excruciating care and attention, although that may just be my forgetful mind filling in the cracks. That artistic talent, the attentiveness to detail even translates to the words on the page, feeling authentic and like a conversation you'd overhear in the cafeteria, or if you were getting groceries with your parents. The effort you put into the world and the words spoken in it makes it feel *real*. And it is.

And that's what makes it so.. How do I say? Powerful? Feels cliché. Wonderful? Too childish. Introspective. A deep reflection of the mundane and the non-mundane, of relationships and feelings and morality and how that all grows to a whole, big mess of weeds and flowers.

Reading your book was like watching how jumbled up your garden was, not because the weeds had clung too tight to the soil, or the flowers were too delicate to withstand the intensity of the sun's glare upon their stems and petals. Rather, it was because it was neglect. The refusal to acknowledge the complexity of it all and holding on to the black and white view of everything we had been taught since we could talk. And I hated it, because it was exactly like mine.

But I kept turning the pages, because I refused to believe that this would be the kind of stories where they never learned, where in the end, they failed. I kept going on, because I had faith that you'd change.

And you did, after quite difficult circumstances.

You got up from the covers of your bed, with gloves on and a shovel in your arsenal, you started to tend to that garden of yours. With the metal blade in hand, you dug out some of the weeds from their roots and cast them aside. Soon after you were done, there were less weeds than before. It wasn't much, but it was better. And you kept working. Kept going.

Soon, bees and butterflies came to visit and you could hear birdsong from your windowsill. It was flourishing. As I read, I realized, that's what I want.

After I put the book down, I stared at the ceiling for a very long time. I was in a bad place at the time, though now looking back, it was really just a hole I dug for myself. The circumstances I was living in had created weeds that snuffed out my lovely flowers. When I would visit, there was no buzzing of bees or song of birds. Just the wind.

I grew tired of how empty it all was, and after some difficult circumstances of my own, I decided that I didn't want that anymore.

So I pulled out the weeds. I watered the flowers. I tended to the garden to the point where it became a daily habit, and soon, it started living.

You, were a very big part of that, whether you meant to or not.

Thank you, so, so much for that, Deborah. I hope you have a good life.

Sincerely,

Nuam Kiim.

P.S. I may have gone overboard with the garden metaphor.