Should I quit teaching?

Should I quit teaching mid-year? For a teacher, the letter can be true and still be early. Early means the alarm is holding the pen.

Tonight, do not open the resignation draft. Write two lines instead: why you started, and who you would want to have gotten it right for.

What your contract allows, what leaving mid-year means for a license, and when you can go are questions for your contract and the people who hold the rules. This page is the sort that comes before them.

Already drowning, with the deadline this week? Then sleep first. Tomorrow, after you have eaten, one line in each column before first period. Nothing gets signed before that.

You have a document with a name like final, and the name is a wish. You open it at night. You add a sentence. You close it. You do not send it. The not-sending is not indecision in the ordinary sense. It is two decisions stacked, and you can only feel one of them.

A student asks, lightly, whether you are leaving too. The "too" is the whole sentence. Someone already left. The student is doing a count. You answer in a voice that is supposed to be steady, and you hear the wobble, and you hate the wobble more than the question.

You look at other buildings the way a person looks at a window from inside a locked room. A new school, a new grade, a job that is not a classroom. The tab stays open. You do not click. Clicking would make the feeling into a plan, and a plan can be judged. The tab is safer. The tab is also a kind of leaving you do not have to admit at the copy machine.

You are good at the work on the days the work is possible, and you are gone on the days it is not, and you cannot tell which days are the building and which days are you. The confusion is the problem under the letter. The letter is what the confusion reaches for, because a letter feels like an action.

You draft the speech to your students. It is kind. It is also a funeral for a job you have not left, and you rehearse the funeral on a Wednesday, which makes Thursday heavier. The rehearsal spends the grief in advance and calls it planning.

Someone who loves you says you should go, or you should stay, and they say it with a clean face because they do not have your first period. Their clean face is not a reason. It is a wish on your behalf. You came here for a sort.

It usually starts as a surge treated like a decision, because the surge had a pen nearby and the pen looked like adulthood. Adulthood is the sort. The pen can wait until the sort has been done in daylight, after food, with the alarm named. The sort is two columns. The building. You. You will make them

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below, in daylight, not tonight in the draft.

What is the letter doing on the table?

Andrew teaches seventh-grade science. He is 36. Six years in one building, and then four in the six since. When the alarm runs him, he copes the Adventurer way: flight. His tell is the badge, flipped, photo, blank, photo, blank, while he talks. After the bell a student asks, "Are you leaving too?" That night, near midnight, he buys a ready-made unit rather than finish the one he has been building. The job board sits in another tab, unopened. Flight can look like preparation. A purchased unit and an unopened tab are the same flight, one of them dressed as work.

The facilitator tells her own leaving in two sentences. She taught eighth-grade English for 12 years, finished the year, and did not come back in August. She does not hand him her exit as a map. It is his story, not hers. Kim, the history teacher and the building union rep, has a line she said early and meant as a record. Some of us stay till June. When Andrew left her building in March, two and a half years back, Kim gave up her prep to sit with his sixth period, 28 sophomores, for eleven weeks. He does not know that yet. The eleven weeks are not a lesson about what he owes her. The fact sits until both of them can stand it.

On the day his principal asks, at lunch, whether he is coming back next year, Andrew puts an unsigned letter on the library table. It has a deadline on it. The book shows one teacher's letter sitting on a library table, unsigned, while a room talks. The evening's task is to see the letter without obeying it.

What he does when the deadline comes is the book's to tell, and it is his, not a moral. Another teacher in another building might sign, and the book would still want the sort first.

What are the two letters that are not the resignation?

Before the resignation draft gets another sentence, the book has a different pair of letters, written earlier, not mailed, not collected, not graded. The facilitator gives them on a quiet Wednesday.

The first is to a teacher. The one who is the reason you are one. For some people that is the teacher who saw them. For some it is the teacher who did not, the one they swore they would not become. Ten minutes. Write as a colleague, not as a student. Kim, who has filed a career's worth of precise papers, writes a memo. To, from, re. She lists what she has won. It is accurate, and it is a brief in her own defense, addressed to the woman who once told her to go find three sources that disagreed with her and then come back. The question on the board was why she is still here. The memo answered a different one.

The second letter is to one student. Not the favorite. Not the success story. The one you would most want to have gotten it right for. Maybe you did. Maybe you did not, and the car still knows the name. Tell them why you are still here. Shannon writes a name and almost nothing else. Tavon. No dear. Kim starts a heading she has used on hard letters home for years, to the parent of record, because she cannot write to the child. It makes the page official. It also keeps her worth in the record instead of in the room.

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You can write these two tonight without deciding anything about employment. They are not a resignation and they are not a pledge to stay. They are a way to hear which question your pen answers when you are scared. If the pen writes a case, you are in Kim's memo. If the pen can write a name and then stops, you are in Shannon's second sheet, and the stop is allowed. Read them to yourself. You do not have to read them to anyone. Circle one sentence that is yours, not the building's. If the sentence is "the schedule is impossible," it is true, and it goes in the building's column. Keep looking. The sentence you are looking for is the one that would still be yours in a building that ran on time.

If this is keeping you from sleeping or eating, or it is not easing, talk to your EAP or a clinician. If it has gone darker than that, or you are having thoughts of not wanting to be here, call or text 988 in the US, any hour. Do not sign anything that size from inside that weather.

What belongs to the building, and what is the exit?

Circle 3 is class size, the schedule, the pay scale as it is, a student's home, the fact that someone left and the students are counting. You did not cause the count. You cannot apologize your way into a different building while you are still inside this one. Name the building so it stops wearing your name.

Circle 2 is the person you can tell the truth to who is not a student. A colleague. A friend who will not turn it into a speech about their own job. The principal, if and when you choose that conversation, in the way your building's process expects. Influence. A conversation is not a signature.

Circle 1 is the unsigned page, the two letters, the unit you finish or the unit you stop pretending to rebuild as a way out. The table's line is worth keeping. Rebuilding the room can still be the exit. Flight loves a project. A project has the shape of commitment and the function of a packed box. If your "I am staying" plan is a massive rebuild that keeps you from feeling the question, look at the plan twice.

Worth lives in Circle 1. Nowhere else. Not in staying to prove you are loyal, and not in leaving to prove you are brave. Those are ways of coping. The worth is in the sentence that is yours, and in not signing anything while the alarm is the one holding the pen.

What do you do before the pen gets a name under it?

Write the two letters, not the third. The teacher who is the reason you are one. The student you would most want to have gotten it right for. Ten minutes for the first. Why you are still here, even if the answer is "I do not know" in one honest line. Do not open the resignation draft in the same sitting. The draft will eat the letters and call it clarity. Clarity that arrives in one sitting, late, is usually the surge.

Two columns, in daylight, after you have eaten. The building. You. Write one line in each column before first period. If a line could be true in any job on earth, it might be yours. If it would vanish in a building that was staffed and sane, it is the building. Make the columns. Live with them for a week before you mark stay or go. The book's letter can sit without being a failure of nerve.

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One flight you call a project. The new unit you bought instead of finishing yours. The tab you will not close and will not open. The rebuild that would take a year and would keep you from having to feel Thursday. Name it. You do not have to delete it today. Andrew's purchased unit and his unopened tab are the same move. Seeing the move is the practice. Whatever he decides, in his story the deciding comes after the seeing, not before.

The guilt that makes every no feel like failing a child, which is a different way of coping from leaving, is on Teacher guilt. The Sunday the body leaves before you do is on Teacher Sunday scaries.

The opening is on the teachers page: 88 essays, 14 done, 74 to go, 37 more hours, and one sentence near the bottom that called her feedback adequate.

The book is sixteen Wednesdays with that letter on the table, and what he can say once the alarm is not writing the sentence.

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I feel like a bad teacher

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Tonight's move

Tonight, do not open the resignation draft. Write two lines instead: why you started, and who you would want to have gotten it right for.

What to do

Write the two letters, not the third. The teacher who is the reason you are one. The student you would most want to have gotten it right for. Ten minutes for the first. Why you are still here, even if the answer is "I do not know" in one honest line. Do not open the resignation draft in the same sitting. The draft will eat the letters and call it clarity. Clarity that arrives in one sitting, late, is usually the surge.

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