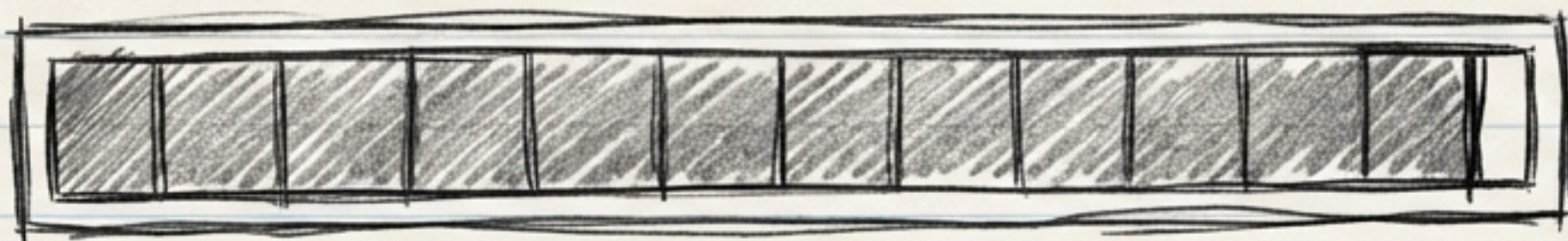


The things we leave unsaid |

An exploration of Merrill Glass's poem *But You Didn't*.

Have you ever messed up and
(expected) the absolute worst?

99%



You brace yourself for the anger.
You prepare the excuses.
And then... nothing happens.
You are simply forgiven.

Three ordinary mistakes



Remember the time you lent me your car and I dented it?

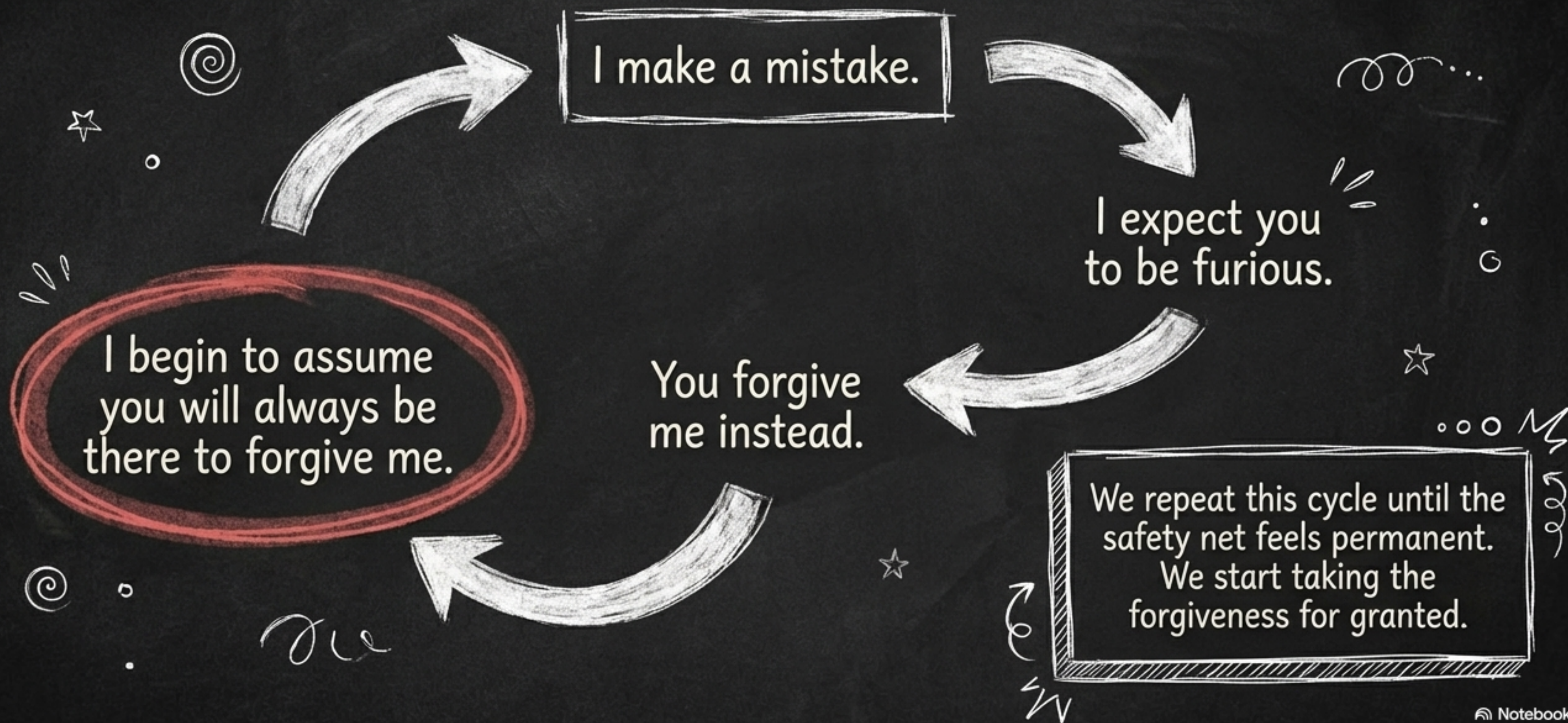


Remember the time I forgot to tell you the dance was formal, and you came in jeans?



Remember the times I'd flirt with other boys just to make you jealous, and you were?

How grace becomes an expectation



The rhythm of a safety net

My Fear

Your Action

I thought you'd kill me...

But you didn't.

I thought you'd hate me...

But you didn't.

I thought you'd drop me...

But you didn't.

The repetition at the end of each stanza builds a comforting rhythm. The narrator is testing the boundaries of the relationship, and the partner's constant patience proves their unconditional love.

And then the rhythm stops.

There were plenty of things you did to put up with me, to keep me happy, to love me, and there are so many things I wanted to tell you...

...when you returned from Vietnam.

But you didn't.

HISTORY CRASHING INTO ORDINARY LIFE

THE DRAFT: During the Vietnam War (1950s-1970s), young men were drafted into the military. Many were just 18 or 19 years old.



THE TOLL: Over 58,000 Americans never came home.

THE REALITY: Global conflict shattered ordinary, everyday relationships overnight.

Two completely different meanings

Stanzas 1, 2, and 3

But you didn't.

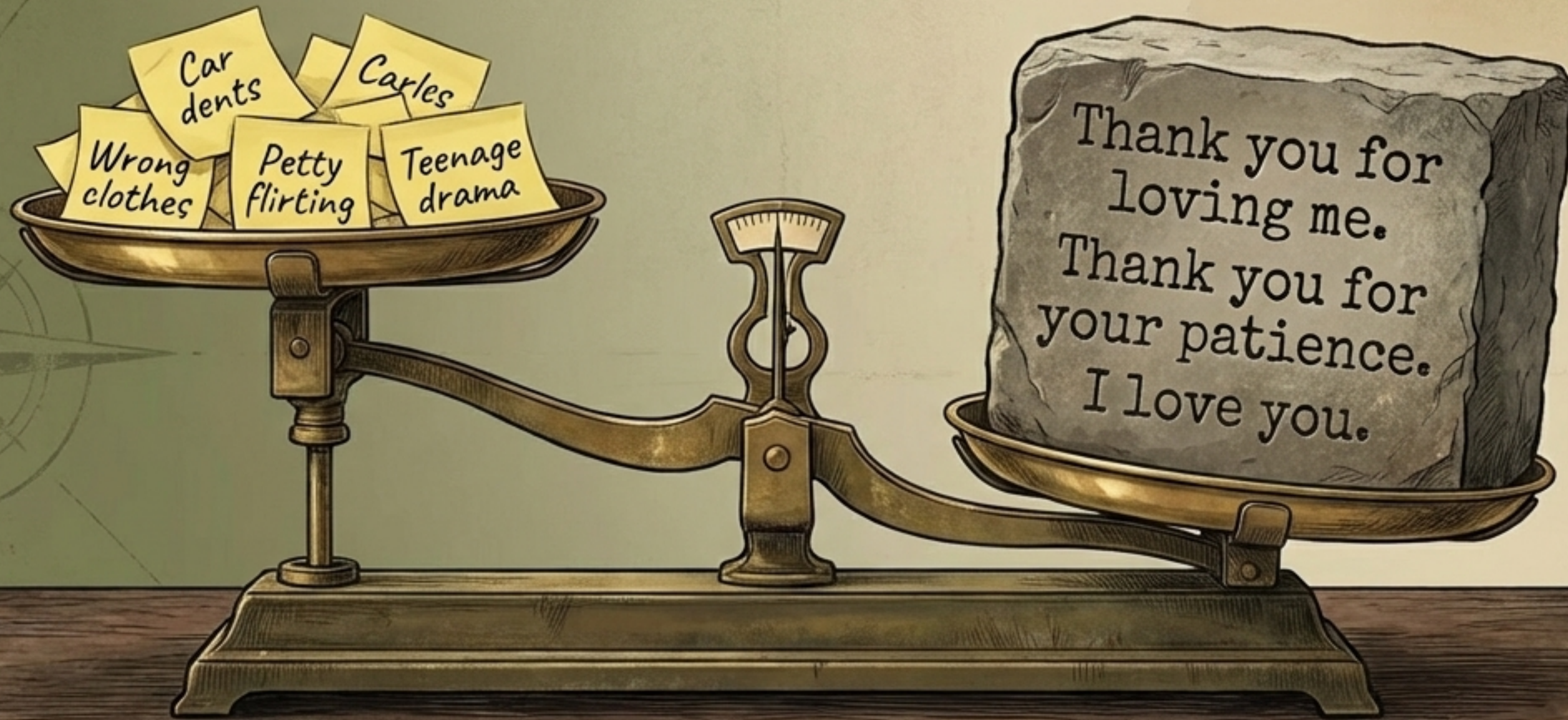
Relief. Love. Patience.
(He didn't get mad).

The Final Stanza

But you didn't.

Devastation. Tragedy. Finality.
(He didn't come back).

The weight of the unsaid



Regret isn't just about the bad things we did.
It is about the deeply important things
we assumed we had time to say later.

A conversation with a ghost

Where is the poet writing this?

- She is alone, looking back at her youth from a quiet room.
- The poem is written as a direct address (you), making it a deeply personal letter.
- It is a letter she knows she can never mail.

A violent shift in perspective

Importance / Stakes
(Low to Extreme)

What feels like a 10 out of 10 disaster when you are young instantly drops to zero when faced with permanent loss.

Dented Car

Jeans at Formal

Flirting

Vietnam

Timeline of the Relationship

If you were directing this as a short film...

Fast-paced,
bright lighting,
slightly chaotic
comedy.

Slower, slightly
embarrassed, high
school gym lighting.

Moody party
lighting, subtle
drama.

Total silence.
No music. A
slow zoom on
an empty room.

How would you change the music, lighting, and pacing to match the emotional crash of the final lines?

The illusion of infinite tomorrows



What does this poem teach us about our relationships?

We treat time like an infinite resource.

We assume we can always apologize tomorrow.

We assume we can say I appreciate you tomorrow.

The poet's message is a warning: Sometimes, the timeline just stops.

Who in your life
puts up with you?
Who are you
assuming will
always be there
tomorrow? |

Don't wait to tell them.