

This Is More than Homesickness  
By Ruth Towne

I'm trapped in my perspective or whatever. No one feels what I do exactly, but at least if I were at home I'd be feeling closer to those I love. Instead, their old news is my new news. New news. The newest information. I never got that before. Now it's nestled on a page next to its partner. Even those words get to be side by side. I don't. And old news? It's just nonsense. I want to be close again for more than three months or three weeks or three days or whatever fragmented break I'm on.

I send my friends letters so they'll feel special. Nevermind. I really send them letters so they'll write back. But they don't. I never feel less special than when they ask for my address again. Why can't they just write it down once? Apparently, it's too cumbersome to memorize and not useful enough to warrant the paper. Lately, I couldn't afford stamps. They are forgetting me. I just know it. And that's much more disheartening than simple homesickness.

I'm fighting. Fighting the distance from the house I grew up in; fighting my long-distance relationships; now fighting myself. I made four phone calls on a Friday night—to Shannon in San Diego; to my parents Tim and Becky and brothers Ethan and Jesse; to Isaac; to Kayla. Naturally, I heard my dad say he loves me. Quite unnaturally, Isaac and Kayla both heard me sniff-sniffle suck in sobs. I described to Kayla that unthinkingly I kept rubbing my fist in wide clockwise ellipses up and down my left thigh. How pathetic is that? She called it self-soothing, something her eleven-year-old nephew Will who has Autism Spectrum Disorder frequently does. I see now that I'm more than sad; I'm oh so very sad. After my call, my mom sent a text saying *You sounded very happy. I'm glad.* So I'm also more than fake; I'm oh so very fake.

Yes, it's my third year here. No, I don't have a concrete identity. No, my name is Ruth. Yes, we've met before. Yes, I'm a Professional Writing major. No, that's not an English major. Yes, I'm on the track team. No, I'm a thrower not a runner. Yes, I'd go home if I could. No, I can't. Yes, I'm counting down the days. No, I can't tell my roommate because she says she's sorry she's not them. Yes, I know I'm hurting her by my hurting. No, I don't know whose turn it is to be hurt this time. Yes, if I sound happy she'll be glad. No, I'm not at all happy here. Yes, I'm okay. No, I'm really not okay at all. Yes, I'm terrified.

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