

What I Have Yet to Overcome
Facing my Fears, and my Fear of the Truth

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This is a collection of letters to people who matter, or used to matter to me. Their names have been replaced with words that represent how I currently feel about them or what I associate with them. I have never before gotten up the courage to say these things to them. I'm still not brave enough to say any of it to their faces. I hope one day I will be.

Dear Fraternity,

Don't grow up. I don't want you to be anything but my baby brother. Even though you say you aren't, I know you're sad that I'll have to leave next year for college. I'm sad too. I don't want to live without you; I want to be home to mentor you, cheer you on, and get you through high school. I just realized that I will graduate college a year before you graduate high school. That's so strange.

It makes me feel so old, you being in middle school already. I know growing up is something that's hard to deal with for everyone, but I feel like it's even harder seeing each other mature since we're so close. Soon you'll be taller than me, a lady on each arm, with admirers and friends trailing in your wake. You've always been so much cooler than me; you're going to be the popular kid, and I'm going to be the weird older sibling. I've seen it happen before.

I'm scared you won't like me anymore. I'm scared you'll roll your eyes when I talk to you, that you won't tell me your secrets like you have before. I don't want you to start caring about girls, or muscle, or homework, or pro sports. I just want you to be my little boy. Don't change.

Dear Anger,

I honestly can't stand you anymore. Nothing could ever have worked between us, for so many reasons. Little things you do, the quirks, the catchphrases, the voices, the mood swings; all the behavioral patterns that I can so easily pick out in you just get under my skin.

I feel sometimes I'm too picky though, too specific, and will one day end up *alone* because of this. At the beginning of our friendship, I liked you so much. But then you rejected me, which hurt at a degree I had seldom felt before. I can't count the times I've cried over you, and because of the things you did.

Honestly, you're the reason I'm not with Loss anymore, and I'm angry at you for that, I'm not going to lie. Everyone else thinks it's for the best, but I miss him more than anything. It was selfish of you, to take advantage of me when I was in such a dark place, a place you also know all too well. And now, I'm somewhere even darker because of what I thought I was willing to give up for you.

I'm afraid our friendship will never be the same. Actually, I'm sure it will never be the same. You're the reason the happiest time of my life ended. I don't know if I can forgive you.

As time goes on, I find myself with fewer and fewer friends. Hardly anyone is tolerable to me anymore, and there's only a few I can really trust. I don't know if you're one of them. I've ruined relationships and shunned so many in the past because of things like this. What happened between us has happened before. I think I know what I want, but then realize it's an attraction fueled by needy tendencies, and I can barely stand the person I think I like. I'm afraid of not feeling wanted, which is why I suffer through having almost anyone at my side.

I know I don't like you anymore. I put up with you because I don't want to be alone, no matter how much it hurts.

Dear Loyalty,

You are truly my best friend. When you told me you were bisexual, I was afraid I'd be weird about it somehow, or that I'd see you differently. I don't. I love you so much.

You're the only person I'm close to that I've never been in a real fight with, or truly angry at. Of course, knowing you for this long, some things you say and do get excruciatingly repetitive, but I've realized I couldn't live without it. When I need someone, you're the first one I call. I couldn't live without you.

It's comforting to know that I don't have to face life alone, and that you'll always be there for me. And I'll always be there for you. One of my biggest fears is that we'll grow apart, move different places, become different people. But I know, as college grows increasingly nearer, and the thought of being apart from you rattles around in my mind, that I'll never become emotionally distant from you as I have with others. I've known you longer than I've known my own brother. We've stayed best friends through so much, I know that no distance, man, or time difference can keep us apart.

I know there's never a reason to be afraid when you've got my back. I'm so glad you're the one I grew up with, and I can't wait to continue growing with you. You're my soul twin, my sister, and my first and last true love. You'll always be a part of me, no matter what. I know there's no reason to fear.

Dear Regret,

I think the last time I saw you was about three years ago at our piano teacher's house when you had a lesson scheduled right after mine. I tried to be nice to you then, but you ignored me, your headphones on, drumsticks hitting your knee to the beat of a private song. I noted how much you had changed. How, even after all those years of seeing you every day, I didn't know

you anymore. It was painful to come to terms with the fact that you were no longer the blonde, square-headed kid I stole a baseball cap from at recess, and shared my lunch and secrets with.

Seeing you that last time brought back so many memories for me. The time with both got soup on 45th Ave before the fifth grade Halloween celebration; the day at lunch that I spat on G and he said, "Regret, your girlfriend's crazy," even when I wasn't yet your girlfriend; the time you came to my house on Valentine's Day just to hand me a card with Snoopy holding a mirror saying, "See? A button isn't half as cute as you!" I remember very specifically the time we went to Nacho Libre and you climbed in my dad's Acura and handed me a mix CD entitled "From Me To You," full of songs you thought I'd like, as well as some we had inside jokes about.

I remember the first time I saw you after you came back from your year living in Guatemala. I can still see you, walking around the bend of the path in my yard, into my view, about six foot two with square glasses and baseball cap, hair blonde as ever. I hugged you from behind as you played my baby-grand piano.

I missed you so much.

I honestly don't know why I broke up with you. I spent most of my childhood dazed, misinformed, painfully ignorant, and confused. I didn't realize or have enough experience then to know how special you were. You were so attentive, so understanding, talented, adorable, and I knew you so well. We grew up together. I still have the baseball cap you gave me when you first asked me out at the end of fifth grade. The inner band is stained green, and under the bill is still written in your tall, sloppy handwriting, "I'll never forget you!" and then your signature and phone number.

I still have your phone number memorized, even though I haven't called in years. I'm scared to see you again, let alone have a conversation.

I feel like you'd be disappointed in how I turned out for some reason. Partially, I think it'd be out of resentment since I broke your heart twice, but I also think we've turned into such different people. There are class pictures of us standing next to each other, year after year, hanging in my hallway at home. I see your face nearly every day as I pass those photos, and remember you as the kid standing next to me, staring into the camera with a sepia-toned smile.

Dear Insecurity,

I'm fairly positive you were my first real kiss. I don't know if it counts though. We said we were "practicing" for when we got into serious relationships, but I sometimes think it was more than that. I don't like being embarrassed and secretive about it anymore as I confront the daunting task of exploring my sexuality as I mature. You don't want to accept it just as much as I don't; we're both scared of what people are going to think.

But there's more than the fear of external judgement that keeps me from confessing this to you. I'm scared that I like you as more than a friend, and I'm afraid you'll not feel the same way. We've been through a lot together, but I don't know if our friendship will lead us anywhere past where it is now. Which I am fine with. I love you like a sister, even though sometimes you push my tolerance to the edge.

The ways you make me angry or jealous, almost purposefully, is sometimes a lot to handle. But I get over it for you, because we need each other. There are guys who are obsessed with you: Z, M, and C, just to name a few. I've never told you how protective of you I feel, and how jealous.

You're blonde, skinny, rich, pretty, stylish, you drive, and you have a pool. I sometimes wish we could trade lives. You don't realize just how easy you have it. You complain too much for me to believe you are grateful for things. You'll be able to get into colleges because you've

got connections, whereas the rest of us have to work for it. It's not fair. And it's not fair the way you flaunt it either, and take it for granted. You make me angry sometimes, Insecurity.

But who you are makes up for it. You're not the kind of person who *becomes* the flaunting, the complaining and the family name, coated in peroxide and makeup. You're just you. But you bring out a side in me I'm scared to admit I have, and I can't help but feel angry at you for some reason for making me feel this way.

I want to be you sometimes. Just being near you is enough.

Dear Loss,

The easiest emotions to succumb to are sadness, doubt, and fear. They creep like shadows through my life. They watch me from the trees, they're under the tables or crammed into drawers. They claw at my heels, and visit me in the hours the rest of my world dreams. They make my world gray, dark, and restricted. I feel I need to tell you this; you were the light in my darkness.

I know I'm an intense person, and often hard to deal with. I'm grateful to you for accepting me. There are moments I feel my blood is black, and a raging disease known as 'uncertainty' taints my heart, my veins pumping it throughout my body, turning me into a ghost.

I am a shell, Loss. The real is lost inside. My outer layer is a facade, my daily life a fantasy. I told you things I've never told anyone. I told you things I've never even told myself. I often lie for attention. Sometimes I feel I lie for no reason whatsoever. I don't know why. They're little white lies though; things that never happened are often the subject of my dinner conversation, feelings I don't have are often confessed to others, and I often say I've seen, heard, or done things I haven't.

Soon enough, my lies become my memory. My life is a wild jumble. I don't know how much of it is true, and how much I've fabricated.

It's a scary thing for me to say. I've never told anyone. And now we're over because of it. I couldn't face the truth of what I'd done, so I wrote over it in my memory. Told you it never happened. I wasn't lying to you; I was lying to myself. I thought what memories I had made up to make myself feel better had become truth. I'm sorry.

Despite, or maybe because everything fell apart, this experience with (and now without) you has made me less afraid. I'm more myself now, I'm more comfortable, confident.

I know I can survive without you. I'll thrive without you.

You'll soon become a rewritten memory, and your face will fade in my mind, until I myself will believe it when I say that I never knew you.

Dear Longing,

I wrote a song for you a while ago. It went like this:

There's a constant reminder lurking outside my door,

And people ask me if anyone lives there anymore.

I just want things back the way they were before,

When I could remember who and what I waited every day for.

I've always looked up to you,

Even if there wasn't reason to.

And I want you here by my side,

I want you here every time I cry,

And I'll be with you in time,
When you finally realize you want
To be mine.

There's more to it, but that's the general gist of it. The point is, I've liked you for a long time. You moving to China for most of the year made that even more complicated. In the summers when I see you, we spend a large fraction of every day together. You always somehow ask me if I have a boyfriend. Sometimes I do, sometimes I don't. I'm always happy when you ask; it shows it matters to you.

The thing is though, you've never done anything about it. I know you've had girlfriends in China, even if you haven't talked about it, and I admit, I feel jealous sometimes. I'm so afraid that you'll never tell me how you feel (or that you feel nothing at all for me), and I'll never tell you either, and then we'll both go off to college with our situation full of loose ends.

Our situation is strange. I'm reminded every day of you and your absence as I look over to your vacant brick house, whereas I sometimes feel you forget all about me when you're in China. We're neighbors, and yet we live worlds apart most of the year. We see each other at yearly intervals of maturity. In many ways, we've grown up together, and yet we haven't. I can't say I know you very well anymore, but for some reason I feel like that makes me miss you all the more. I want to know you, Longing. I count down the days to your return. Come back. Come home.