

Remembering to Let Go

By Adam Polaski • Published in Hello Mr. Issue 03 • Spring 2014

I make my way to my front door to let you into my apartment, and as I do, it dawns on me that the last time you were here was the very first day I moved to this city.

You greeted me at 9am and hauled my first-time-on-my-own living supplies up to the tenth floor. You served as my mom's first mate on the *S.S. Build This Fucking Ikea Bed*, gritting your teeth as she protested your decision to not use every single screw in the bag. You congratulated me on my successful move-in later that night by kissing me hard on the lips and rubbing my back, smiling at how awesome it was to have me just eight blocks north of you.

I open the door and see that you look way more awkward than you looked that day – you've got a half smile on your face and you're biting your lip and your hands are in your pockets, disappointed that I didn't just leave you outside waiting forever.

It's been six months since you ended things. Six months since I spent the night praying on your bathroom floor as I scrambled for a plan to keep you as mine. Six months since I began to accept that there would be no reconciliation for us – no epilogue where you chase after me in an airport and admonish yourself for foolishly breaking my heart. Six months since I began my bitter and angry and depressing journey apart from you.

You step into my room, and we clumsily hug. You sit at the foot of my bed, and we make small talk: *How are things?* and *How was vacation?* and *It was really nice thank you for asking how are you?* and *How exciting for your brother!*

Small talk becomes tiny talk. I joke about how much cleaner my room is than yours. You ask me about my roommates, their dog, the weather, what I had for dinner that night, how many times I sweep my floor each week.

And then, without transition, we enter Big Talk: Talk where I apologize for being so silent over the past few months, where you admit that it was best for us to take some time apart, where we confess that we both probably tried too hard to force the recovery.

I tell you how mad it made me when you would forget our plans – plans that we made well in advance, plans that we'd confirm that morning, plans that were our only tactic toward preserving ourselves as "friends."

I tell you that I hate your new boyfriend, who's no longer new. That it's not your fault, but that I will probably always hate him. That I don't want to talk about your boyfriend or pretend to be happy that you're so happy with your new life.

I tell you that I've had anxiety dreams about only having sex with guys I rate one or two stars on OK Cupid for the rest of my life—in Big Talk, there are no secrets.

I apologize for not being ready. For not being able to just be friends again. For finding it impossible to suspend the melodramatics or give you a break or move the fuck on.

I apologize for many things – but not for everything. I explain that I can't be your best friend. That we'll have to settle for "friends" or "friendly" – just regular people who talk politics and watch movies and go to bars and sometimes Gchat each other to stay connected. For now.

I know that I have admitted defeat by telling you that I still need you. That I am so scared that the man who was the most important thing for so long could simply vanish entirely, divorce himself from my life and spoil my memories and make them cold and dead and turn them into regrets.

That I tried to let you go, but that I selfishly still want a part of you for myself.

Because I miss you.

You look at me for a minute. It's a long minute, where neither of us say anything. Your eyes begin to trickle, and you bend your neck back, examining my ceiling and sniffing your tears and sighing the world's longest sigh of relief.

You say that you hated not being able to talk to me, not having me around. You say that you were not trying to cut me out of your life. You say that you hate seeing me upset. That you are sorry. That you want part of me for yourself, too.

We have left marks on each other, and I know that whatever those marks are – imprints, bruises, probably a few hickies – they'll never really fade. They'll never really disappear from our skin and our minds and our hearts.

We hug goodbye, and it is a very long hug. "It's nice to see you," I say, and I feel your head nodding against my cheek.

I feel lighter, but I am also hoping that you will leave me very, very soon. I am afraid that if I hug you for one second longer I will fall into the imprints and the bruises and the hickies, and they will swallow me whole.

I say goodbye to you at the door, returning to my bedroom and preparing to let you go, ready for the Big Talk to work its magic.

I lie down and close my eyes. I'm telling myself that we are done. I'm reassuring myself that this is good. I'm accepting that this is over.

And I am trying to resist. But I am letting down my guard. And I am remembering.

I'm remembering you kissing me hard. I'm remembering you rubbing my back. I'm remembering how amazing we were. I'm letting the memories wash over me. I'm allowing them to flood my mind and intoxicate my heart and threaten my reality.

I'm remembering, and I'm remembering, and I'm surrendering, and I'm giving in, and I'm caving in, and I'm letting go, and I'm letting go, and I'm done.

And I am realizing that I have let go of so much, and I am still left with everything.