

Dear Chinatown,

I've been trying to figure out how to write this love letter, but all I've thought about is how Grover from *Sesame Street* was on "Life Kit" and told everyone, it's the little things to look forward to. I thought I'd share the little things that help me through this.

one, the moment when my brothers ask, "can you crack my back?" I know I don't have enough mass or weight to denotate their pressure points that causes their bones to P O P, but my featherlight feet will print maps onto their backs.

three point one, the great side effect when I cant remember if I told them id marry them

five, rain in the bg, instant ramen & Studio Ghibli movies.

four point twelve aka a memo from alissa, writing myself as a heroine & rewriting my own narrative. not sure what that means yet, but I hope it destroys spines & is kissed by whimsical authenticity.

two, playing a podcast, listening to my gooseneck kettle scream / the birds' singing / an eight am lecture as I calculate grams of coffee, and swirl the kettle. forcing the hot water to tango with my ground coffee. (the hot water voluntarily leads, sometimes.)

three, writing letters at ten pm, always at night, never disappointing, listening to lo-fi mixed with ra in & hoping the black ink does not bleed through my graph paper.

four, writing something whimsical: yearning & desiring & craving text as film that develops [character], focuses [on growth], and finishes [in beauty].

one point five, leaving a mess on the gray carpet as we (mybrothersandI) battle in mario / monopoly deal / thirteen. we take turns winning. each of us, different.

other things: colors & how they gradient into different emotions / starting new things: work-outs, walks, cooking, zines / reading near the window / watching and streaming / hosting tea parties & study dates / happy hours with friends or my mfa cohort / trying to pick and choose who I want to be.

I don't want to pretend the uncertainty doesn't exist. There's no point to. My plans to go on apartment tours, get my eyes examined, confess my feelings to my crush, set boundaries, take risks, and gain confidence have changed.

Instead, my roommates have all gone home. I'm not sure when they'll be back. I'm not sure when I'll be able to go outside without being afraid of the virus. My schoolwork and my job are all online. It's one screen after another. Being alone isn't interchangeable with loneliness, but it is hard because I am lonely.

In that loneliness, I've been contemplating my past, wondering what I would have done if I knew beforehand. Would I have spent more time with my loved ones? Would I have said yes to more social events? Would I have taken better care of myself? Would I have tried harder to keep in touch with people? Would I hold the same apathy?

I'm not sure, but I can only continue to find the small things to look forward to. I look forward to taking a photo of the red and yellow pillars in the gray alleyway. The dragons looking at me, almost hissing that I am here. Their eyes glowing. Their looks piercing. I look forward to the dragons.

Love You Chinatown,
Alissa