

You know that feeling of absolute unfamiliarity when you sit down on a train, a bus or a plane? You've just passed through hours of security. The TSA officer screamed at you for forgetting to take off your shoes, which ended up taking forever. You don't know where you are going. You feel lost. Many of us say at this point, I just want to be home. **But** this very feeling of discomfort—of wanting to be home—is what makes me love travelling so much. I don't have to justify feeling displaced.

I've longed to go home ever since I left Korea. I thought everything was perfect when I was growing up in Korea. I was born here in the States, but when I was just two months old, my parents received that phone call that every Ph.D students long for. My dad had secured a job in Korea as a professor. It was good-bye New York, hello Seoul.

That time was extremely picturesque. My sister and I loved to sleep in the same bed with our dog, Jenny. In the morning, we would always go to our parents' room and wake them up by poking their nose and tickling them. I snuck under my dad's piano whenever he practiced, taking blissful naps under a thundering Schubert. I loved dinnertime. My sister and I were too impatient to wait for our parents' late night musician schedule, so we would eat our first dinner at around five. And at around nine, we would indulge in a second dinner, complete with wine that we—of course—weren't allowed to have.

Right around when I was ten, my parents decided that it was time for my sister and I to move back to the States. I brought home math exams decorated with F's and D's, and if lucky, C's. My parents thought the numbers-only approach in the Korean education system didn't fit me. My sister also wanted to pursue music professionally, in New York. But my dad wouldn't be coming with us. His job in Korea was too stable. One morning, with a simple wave at the airport, my "home" disappeared.

It was incredibly hard. My first year in the States, I would start crying at the smallest reminders of what we left back in Korea: this one sweater that my dog would love to steal a nap in; the spices of Kimchi in a restaurant that would not quite be the same as those in Korea.

When we finally arrived at our current apartment in NYC, I felt displaced and lost. I didn't know where my home was anymore. Meanwhile, my dad moved out of our house in Korea, so whenever we went back for breaks, the place felt like my best friend's home—not my home.

Even before I could fully register our place in NYC as my home, it was time for me to go to college. All college students live away from their parents, and plenty of international students don't have the luxury of visiting their parents on small holidays like Columbus Day.

But somehow, this issue plagued me deeply. My parents' home in Korea didn't feel like home, because I never grew up there. Our place in New York, which my sister started to live in after I moved out to college, felt more like my sister's place than my home. I wasn't comfortable enough at Harvard to feel at home here. When things got hard at school and I just wanted to escape, I didn't have a home to go to. So when I met my ex-boyfriend, I was so absolutely relieved. He served as a type of refuge for me—in this relationship, I no longer had to confront this psychological displacement.

When he and I broke up past semester, I felt desolate; alone; crushed. I was devastated. I remember the day we broke up, I went to all of my classes, trying to brush off the tears as just a horrible allergic reaction. But after my classes were over, I walked around the yard with tears that had built up falling down my face. Everything in the yard—the happy pink and green chairs, the statue—felt foreign to me. I was the 10 year old me again, who had just moved from Korea, except that I was 19.

But sadness gives you clarity. Within this misery, I realized that I was looking for an already established home that fit my criteria. But such a thing cannot exist—my definition of a home, a place with all of my family members in one location, disappeared ten years ago. I was missing out on an opportunity to create another home, here.

Home, in fact, it is whatever you make of it—and for me, I have a home that happens to be scattered in three different places, each to offer different sorts of memories.

I wish I could wrap up this speech with a simple, neatly tied-up conclusion that Harvard will be my next home. But some endings aren't that simple. It's meant to be messy and unclear. It turns out that the root of the word travel is "travail." I know that it won't be an easy road—it will take some effort and struggle. But it will be an incredibly rewarding path. I am excited for it. Thank you.