

*May 2022*

“We’re moving back home.” No mom, I’m being ripped away from home. I moved here six years ago unwillingly, having no clue what was happening, and now we’re going back? Six years isn’t just six years for me. I’ve been here half of my life and my first half in Korea, I can’t even recall most of those years. Living here means much more than being present in this neighborhood. The physical and mental growth, my childhood, and teenagehood all trace back to Shanghai. It feels like all the development I’d been through throughout half of my life was brushed away in an instant like useless breadcrumbs by that single announcement my parents made. But the second I looked back at mom, I just knew I couldn’t blame her. It’s because of covid. It’s because of the lockdown. But deep down I know I have nothing to fault. I just wanted something to be mad at.

*August 2022*

I felt ridiculous being homesick for another city when I was in my own “home” country. But the days used to be just utterly perfect. Lying in the soft, dewy grass, chatting nonsense with the people I love under the unrealistic sky (in what ways was it unrealistic). Spending the weekend roaming around the area with absolutely no plan, visiting cheap restaurants, cafes, and small stores. Eating the jelly-like ice cream that was way too concerningly highlighter green with my friend on the edge of the steps of her apartment door. Even if I did do something similar, it wasn’t the same. The grass in my new school was fake and plastic. Everything was expensive and my weekends were packed with classes. Most of all, my friends weren’t there. I just texted my friends back in Shanghai constantly. I hope they won’t forget. Most of my social interaction was texting my friends back in Shanghai. Even when I got to know more people or made new friends, my heart and mind was not in the present moment.

*September 2023*

At one point I did get used to being alone. But the silent notifications on my phone were one of the loudest signs that snapped me back into reality. Months have passed and everyone is moving on and I did not grow a single bit. (needs more build-up) I was the one chaining myself to the past. I know that I can’t change the situation. I know that I need to get over it. And by now I know that time won’t simply fix this so why was I not even trying to change? It doesn’t hurt for me to try something so I decided to start off by making myself more present physically. Studying in the school library after school and perhaps getting involved in some activities. If it doesn't work, at least I’ll get my homework done in that time.

*October 2023*

After your highs, there will always be lows but as much as you have your lows, things will always come back up. But I guess sometimes you can’t just wait for it to happen you have to make it happen. Playing table tennis with my friend was a minor change but had a major effect on triggering the start of something more. Meeting up as soon as class ended, inhaling food, and running back to school chaotically with a sweet cold drink in our hands before practice was something that fueled me throughout the week. Suffering over our Chinese assessment, cracking up over the most meaningless things, lying down on the hard concrete floor staring into the blue sky, and almost developing minor scoliosis. Having the best experience with this friend gave me the courage to open up to more people and the hope of getting back the ‘perfect’ days but in a different way. Staying on Google Meet for the entire night with an entire group of people to study for the next day’s test. Going to the school store

after submission to buy a smoothie, manipulating ourselves into thinking we deserve it. Sharing an internal crisis because of the summative schedule that was packed like a stack of thesauruses. Roaming around the area and chatting nonsense with the people I love. Looking back, it was mostly a matter of perspective. It's impossible to relive the moment which is why I couldn't simply move on. But it's impossible to relive this moment which is why I decided to move on. Just like how you can consider someone in your family even if you are not related by blood, home can also be wherever you place yourself, where you try to settle your heart at.