

A Letter for the Dancing Deserter

Your address lines are a language within themselves, a string of nonsensical words that you read and write so often you think they've burned into your hands. You see them under your name, in that mental list describing yourself, conditioned over years of filling out "Who are you?" worksheets. After you've moved, you nearly write your old address again, before catching yourself. You erase it and write something new, this foreign string of words that doesn't mean anything to you yet.

This time, you'll nearly write ballet under the "hobbies" box, before deciding to erase it. The blank space, still carrying the imprint of your pencil, gives you the same feeling as the foreign address lines.

You think about the potential of your old things sometimes. Maybe you should've exploited it while you had it. Maybe you should've taken more pictures of it. Maybe you should've run through your old house like Coraline, counting the windows and the corners of your house, memorizing paint chips and furniture scratches until you saw home whenever you closed your eyes. Perhaps you would've been able to hold on to it then.

Useless to think about it now, you think, turning away from memories of barres and stretches you thought tedious. You make the only decision you can and walk away. No one blames you, but you are moving on from something that brought you joy, and it's cruel how easy it is to imagine a timeline where you could stay.

You'll forget about old things most of the time. Life continues, and you busy yourself leaping forward instead of looking backward, but sometimes, people will ask you about the things you left behind. Your chest lurches thinking of a familiar child who endured instead of deserting, and you feel like a child all over again wondering if she would be proud of you. You imagine two children looking at each other, one disappointed and one sorry.

It feels like your old things are slipping through your fingers again until you repeat the story so many times your hands stay empty. You stop feeling the loss, and you'll vaguely register this feeling as acceptance.

For now, you walk forward.

It's a new place, with new corners and new windows, and it's unbearably empty, for now. But a bowl is most useful when it is empty, and you'll fill it up with more until the walls are painted with your colors and your thoughts stare back at you in scratches on furniture and peeling paint. You'll come across the memories again, a pair of pointe shoes in the corner of a room. Pick them up. Maybe they'll still fit.