

Most of the time, we come home to our bedrooms and enjoy seeing all the little reminders of all the people who love us. Gifts and mementos of memories past, each with an accompanying story brimming with love. We read books and use pens that our mother gave us for a birthday, or watch TV under a blanket permanently “borrowed” from a dear friend.

I used to feel that way about my bedroom. I used to look at my jewelry stand and my extending table and enjoy remembering where they came from. But recently, the experience of being at home has soured.

That’s one of the problems with ending a long-term relationship: everything you have is attached to them in some way.

Today when I walk into my bedroom, the first thing I see is an abstract portrait of myself hung next to my bed, painted by my ex-partner. I’ve always struggled with finding myself pretty, and this birthday gift from them had been their attempt at helping me see what they saw in me. It was modeled after a photo my cousin took of me, standing by a lamp with a soft orange-yellow light emitted on the side of my face. It was one of their favorite photos of me.

Looking at the portrait can be overwhelming, so I turn away, but I’m faced with my sofa. My mother gifted me this sofa, but on it I spent two years sharing laughter, kisses, naps, and tears with my ex. I see a compilation of all our moments on that sofa flash before my eyes. I see their face and their smile. I see us tangled into one another while watching Heartstopper. A hole opens in my chest.

So I head to the bathroom to get away from my room, but I’m only further bombarded with reminders of what I’ve lost. I reach for my toothbrush that still stands next to theirs. I step in the shower and see their hair products and face wash at the edge of the tub. I dry my hair with my towel and find one of their curls still stuck to it. I wipe my tears in the mirror and see them standing behind me, asking me to move over so they can see themselves too.

Everywhere I look, it seems like my apartment has been slowly taken over, invaded by little details of theirs that I never noticed before. Their presence took over my whole life, and their existence left its footprint in my home. Before, I didn’t mind. I loved how comfortable and settled into my apartment they were. They didn’t even have to pack a bag to spend the night anymore.

I had no issue with seeing the jar of date ideas we made together on my desk. It didn't bother me to wash the cup they used most frequently. I could crochet without thinking of the stuffed animal I made them for our anniversary. And whenever I wanted to, I could always call them if I missed them. Today, that's not my reality.

I've been spending a lot of time outside of my apartment as a result of the breakup. I can only cry so much while searching for the smell of their perfume in my halls before it starts to feel a little pathetic. I want to feel comfortable in my home again, but the truth is I'm not ready to fully purge them from my life. Being in love with them feels right, and trying to "cleanse" my space of that feels wrong.

But with time, I hope my bathroom will become mine again. I hope that cup won't bother me. I hope that jar of date ideas will be stored in a box, never thrown away, but finally let go. Someday, I'll make my home my own again.

But for now, I'll spend my evenings in the library when my apartment just feels too empty.