



Truly the morning that Clare (I:[@okayclare](mailto:@okayclare), T:[@okayclare](mailto:@okayclare)) emailed me this piece, I was thinking about how specifically tricky it would be to be going through a breakup during quarantine. Thinking of this sweet peach during this time!

I went through a breakup about a week before the quarantine started. A brutal one. A “pack your bags and run because the person you were living with was getting ready to leave by starting one with someone else” kind of break up.

The rug was pulled out from underneath me, and when I fell the floor was gone too.

The spread of COVID-19 felt far away in the aftermath. I spent the week after with friends, forcing myself into living to feel normal, but as the weekend after approached I felt myself compelled to crawl back to my parents house in the suburbs like a wounded animal. Then, the pandemic began in earnest. The few days I meant to spend there before finding a new apartment has turned into three weeks, and now seems it has the potential to be indefinite. The coping tools I have used in the past to care for heartbreak are now unavailable, since almost all of them involve being around other people. Surrounding myself with friends, losing myself in work or comedy, even kidding myself into thinking I am ready to go on a date and getting drinks with a stranger are all not possible. There is only me, and I have to sift through whatever that means.

The unanticipated boon is the time I have been able to spend with my parents. I don't know when in my adult life I will be around them so much again, and it's brought us closer together—after all, they can hear me when I cry myself to sleep. It's always been hard for me to simply experience my feelings (as my therapist often encourages me to do) and now, it is the only thing I can do. When I wake up from a dream and realize what I feel next to me is not the person I loved for two years but a 15 lb weighted blanket from Target (a purchase I highly recommend to anyone, brokenhearted or not), the anxiety and sadness that roils up from my belly can only be addressed by me.

And so, I have started making bread. Every 12 hours, I feed my starter (gifted to by the lovely Nina Slesinger), I test it, start a batch of dough, and I cry a little bit, too. My mom liked to stock up on baking supplies even before the pandemic, and I have a 10lb bag of flour in which to work out my grief. Nurturing my starter and folding the dough and letting it rest and folding it again has become as important to my week as my videoconferencing therapy session. My arms hurt from the repetitive motion of fold, fold, fold. Sometimes in my sadness I feel surprised by the finite edges of my body; that I am not just bleeding away into the air around me. The soreness in my arms, the smell of the baking bread, sharing it with my family and dropping it off at friends' houses—all that helps remind me

that I am real. It tethers me. I can't ignore my starter and think I will have a nicely risen loaf of sourdough at the end of the process. I can't pretend something is okay when it's not. I have to tend to myself.

Maybe too much has already been written already about baking and emotions and using hard work to seek out a transformative experience around grief. But I am finding comfort in the cliché. In baking bread, I am caring for myself. It feels good to feel my body, and to work to feed it. I know that I have yet to feel like I have come out the other end, but I am starting to feel like I am slowly building the floor back under me.

Image: [@\\_maggiestephenson](#)

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## SNAIL-MAIL-IN-PLACE

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