

I live in sounds and smells.

I have always been a very auditory person. I associate things with sounds that are good and sounds are bad. For example, I **love** the sound of people walking in dirt, or high heels on tile. I **love** old keyboards, the sound of rain against the window.

I hate the sound of heartbeats, the throbbing pulse when you lay your ear up against your pillow. I hate nails on a chalkboard, though I think just about everyone does. But I also hate the **shrill** noise of a phone, the **crinkle** of aluminum foil, people **chewing**.

I was raised by sounds.

The TV keeping me occupied while my babysitter sat beside me. The songs my mother would play throughout the house. My sister's soft breathing as we had a sleepover in the guest room.

Sound is how I interact with the world around me. One of my earliest memories is sitting on my couch— or rather, laying on my grandmother, who is laying on my couch— waiting for my mother to come home. The TV would be playing some show that I probably was not supposed to be watching when I would hear the garage door opening. That sound, the mechanical thrum of the garage door, became one of my favorite sounds because it meant *mom*. As soon as I heard it, I would bolt to the door and listen. I would be able to hear the clicking of my mom's heels on the concrete ground, growing louder as she grew closer. Until she opened the door and was *home*.

Along with sounds, I have always been rather sensitive to smells. They give me headaches. They comfort me. Sometimes, it feels like I am assaulted by them.

Like sounds, the world is divided into smells I like and those I don't. I **love** *Wings* perfume, smoke, and cauliflower cooking on the stove. I hate sweet smells, like starburst and airheads.

I remember my first boyfriend, the cologne he used to wear would honestly stop my thoughts. It was like being a video put on pause. Maybe I liked him simply for that, now that I think about that.

And then I came here. Suddenly my favorite sounds and smells were gone and I was left reconstructing what comforts me.

It became the sound of my roommate and friends aggressively typing because we don't know how to gently press the keys. It became the sound of pages turning or the scratch of my roommate's pencil. The quiet murmur of conversations late at night. The cars passing by the window.

It became the smell of my pillow when I lay down at night. My roommate's shampoo because it is definitely the strongest smelling shampoo I have ever smelled. The Kline Theater's office.

It was all so different, yet still so similar.

It's a strange way to live, and it makes it hard to define home. It's not really a place for me so much as it is a culmination of sounds and smells that take me back to a feeling of warmth that permeates my chest.

And I **love** my family and friends, but I don't really feel this just when I'm with them.

It could be an idea, but I never really like abstractions like that. I actually cannot comprehend abstract ideas sometimes. Like when teachers ask you to rate your feelings from

one to ten? Or the doctor asks for your pain level? Never got that. They're just numbers. How can I quantify feelings? How can I turn my feelings into a home?

So home isn't a place, a person, or an idea. It is the sound of the garage door opening in the evening, telling me my mother is home. It is the sound of my mother's heels on the kitchen floor as she makes dinner. It is the gentle hum of the TV in the living room as I talk to my sister. It is my cat meowing from another room.

It's the smell of my mom's perfume as I rummage through her drawers, looking for q-tips. The smell of smoke wafted into the house from the fire outside. It was the smell of my sheets, fresh from the dryer, as my mom helped me put them back on my bed and tried to teach me how to do hospital corners.

Home is the sounds and smells of my childhood, waiting to coddle me in a wave of nostalgia.