

Hi family –

Starting this off acknowledging that my letter is late and I apologize for depriving you all of the excellent content I'm about to share. If anything good has come out of this quarantine it's that I now have finally sat down to write this all out.

Hold onto your britches it's story time with Hannah.

Where I last left everyone off was February of 2019 and my lord have things changed around here in a year. I'll fast-forward through the more boring pieces and just highlight you all on some of the major changes that have taken place in the past year. Honestly, I probably need an agenda for this letter but I'm going to make you all suffer through my train of thought and just go for it, enjoy.

In February 2019 – as you should all know – I moved to New York, in June I moved in New York for the second time, and most notably last weekend I moved for the third – and last – time. We all know that moving is difficult for a number of reasons, and moving in New York City is all of those reasons on steroids (factoring in the mass Covid-19 chaos did not make it any easier).

I first moved into a sublet apartment, got me on my feet in New York and allowed me to move without the burden of purchasing furniture, in June I moved into my own lease with two random roommates in the same neighborhood. Stuytown (pronounced like 'pig sty') is a massive corporate owned housing zipcode residing between 14<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> street on the East Side of Manhattan. They're generally known as being spacious, well taken care of apartments, which as you can imagine is not a normal apartment around here. The biggest perk was these apartments are 'no fee'. No fee is a term you end up learning very quickly if you're trying to move anywhere in the city, it's also the biggest rip-off I've ever heard of and plays a massive factor into why I will be parking myself at my current address until the day I move back to the Midwest (yes mom, I will come home).

A fee on an apartment refers to the broker's fee. You, the tenant, will be paying upfront the cost for the landlord's advertising. It's very common here to pay 15% of a years rent upfront to secure an apartment, that does not include the security deposit or the first month's rent. I chose to live in Stuytown for so long because there is no fee on apartments owned by a corporation, and Stuytown is the only corporately owned housing in Manhattan. However, obviously I ended up moving. Why?

A month and a half ago my closest Kansas City friend, Marie, moved to New York and started a job in marketing. For the first five weeks she lived in my bedroom, not in my apartment, in my bedroom. She slept on a twin inflatable mattress and we spent our weekends scouring every real estate website in our price range to find a new home to move to before we killed each other. We finally caved on the fee apartments and were shown a beautiful unit with a full sized kitchen (those are impossible to find in New York) on 44<sup>th</sup> Street. The upfront cost of renting

the apartment about made me keel over and die but the stability of living in a rent-controlled home for the next few years was worth it.

Part of this choice for me was a no-brainer. I had been living the past year of my life never feeling settled or happy in my home. Everything was temporary and while that was a choice I had made it didn't make it any easier. I missed the feeling of having a home, having someone to go home to, having my own space that wasn't in the confines of my tiny bedroom. Post-move I am so grateful to have all the things that I do and be able to share my time with someone who knows me and cares about me. There's a comfort in having a roommate you trust enough to leave you alone when you need it, but will sit and watch movies with you on the weekend.

Back-track to summer 2019.

The second half of 2019 was tough. I had moved to New York to seek out the life I wanted to lead and I have largely been successful in that respect. I love my job, I enjoy the work that I do, I've networked, I've grown, I've learned so much more than I was ever given the opportunity to work towards at my prior job. Professionally I was on the top of the world. Personally I was not. I felt alone, I'd lost a key part of my family without any warning, I missed my sisters, my cousins, my friends, my parents. I don't think I've ever felt as lost as I did after losing Uncle Bill and having to return to life as scheduled when I felt so far from ok.

I think what we all learned was perseverance during those times.

What that taught me was how to pick myself up, put together the pieces, and do what I had to do to be okay. That looks different for every single person and it certainly wasn't easy for me to figure out my own path, but of course what spring boarded me was my family.

In late May my sister Emily came to visit me for a weekend and we were all over town. That showed me my love for the city I was in and how highly I think of times I'm able to share it with people I love. I started walking more.

In June Joshua and Mariah visited and I found myself laughing more than I had in a long time. I learned there's a lot to explore in New York outside of my particularly singular love for cold brew coffee. I started branching out into new areas of town and inviting friends.

In July I woke up the morning of the 4<sup>th</sup> in the cornhole and decided I would not be the only 'big kid' not running the 5k. So in what I will congratulate myself with being a force of absolute god, I ran – for the first time in my entire life – more than 2 miles. It was hot, I was looking real uncomfortable, my heart did at one point hit 198, but I finished. I still believe they should have handed out Coors at the finish line instead of bananas but whatever. I started running, slowly at first but I was still doing it.

All of those things snowballed as time wore on. I found myself making new friends, reaching out to ones I hadn't spoken to as much, exploring the city – always with a cold brew in hand –

and paying mind to my physical fitness in ways I never had before. I agreed -gasp- to run a half marathon this coming July with the cousins.

I – for all intents and purposes – felt like I was going to close out 2019 on a high note. Then I touched down in Rochester for Christmas. Someone cue the suspenseful music.

Do you know that feeling when your family is way too cheerful and you just know something bad is happening? That was my greeting out of the Rochester airport, and subsequently the longest five-minute car ride of my entire life. First off mom and dad, you guys are not subtle, second off we all know how this story goes if we're on Mary Ann's extensive mailing list so I won't relive it in HD, let's just say it was particularly trying. However, what we gained out of that was worth it all. I have a mom who's on her way to healthy again, which as most of you know is all I've wanted for a very long time. That's the most important thing, but the things that no one else saw made this the most memorable Christmas we'll ever have.

I watched my dad step up as a husband, a father, and a mentor to be there for all of us. He would leave for work before we were all awake, and then straight from work he'd go sit with my mom at the hospital until falling into bed somewhere near 9pm most nights. Hassan is the unsung hero here, please send pita bread as thanks.

I spent more time with my sisters that I had in years. It was basically just the three of us that week, there was no distinct adult in the group (I sometimes pretended it was me) doing 1000 piece puzzles, eating everything in the house, watching Harry Potter, moving mattresses into the other persons room because god forbid we're not sleeping near each other, and making jokes that were hilarious and mostly at Emily's expense.

My mom saw the community we'd built over the last how many years rally behind her. She's so loved by so many and that was the most important thing for us at that time. Knowing that she finally saw how much people care for her and that she is worth it. You don't always have to take care of everyone mom, don't stop because we're all totally useless without you, but we need you. No one cared that Christmas was on December 27<sup>th</sup>. Honestly, without you Sarah might only speak in TikTok for the rest of her life and that keeps me up at night.

I think that about wraps this up.

Currently I am quarantined as my office had several cases of Covid-19. We're on week 3 of mandatory work from home with no clear end in sight. We're in an apartment with nearly no furniture since we moved last weekend, the couch is on its way though thank god. I went on a 5 mile – appropriately distanced – run. It feels a bit like the world is ending but doing my best to stay positive. Feel free to facetime me or call if you want, I really have nothing going on for the foreseeable future.

I hope you enjoyed this lengthy essay, consider it a peek inside my brain. Messy isn't it?

Hope to see you all very, very soon. Stay safe, practice social distancing, wash your hands, do not get near my mother or any immunocompromised folk.

Sending all the love,  
Hannah