I’m going to condense things a little, because several points all come back to the same thing; but again, list format because it definitely makes things more cohesive and easier to get through.

1. *“It’s just that I couldn’t understand why, even when I had suggested going to Grey’s twice already, that you didn’t say anything. It’s not that I assumed the worst but that you were coming off as being evasive…”*I think one of the issues here is that while your mind reads everything, mine doesn’t always; I have a (admittedly bad) habit of skimming, and it doesn’t mean I’m not interested, I’ve always been a fast reader but this also means that I don’t always see things, I accidentally skip over them, miss them, or even think that I’ve mentioned it already. Like that time you IMed me with a link and I had no idea what it meant and like ten minutes later I asked, and you went, “I COMPLETELY FORGOT TO EXPLAIN WHAT WAS HAPPENING.” And we giggled about it, and laughed, because it’s the same as “Grey says Pennsylvania,” sometimes I read things and completely and unintentionally skip over them, without meaning anything at all except that I am terrible at that.
2. *“Aside from the hotel conversation, we haven’t discussed AN at all this year. We haven’t had a single conversation about what we were going to do or hoped to do.”*

This literally has nothing to do with a lack of interest and everything to do with a) my worry that I was even going to be able to come; I didn’t want to make plans only to have to break them, because I still don’t have a job and my car is worrisome; and, more importantly; b) everything that has happened. Mom started going downhill in September or so, and after that I hardly even recall *anything* except taking care of her, because half of the time I was so desperate for it to be anything *but* leading to her death, so I spent a lot of time trying to convince myself that she was fine, that everything was fine. I didn’t talk about AN pretty much at all, because so far every time I have gone to AN, something has happened, and to be honest, during those months, I was terrified that Mom would die while I was in Canada, so for a while last year I just avoided talking about it altogether, and eventually it just shifted to the back of my mind and I forgot entirely about it, which leads to c) a little also because I just have that lack of communication problem where I forget about things until the last second, it’s just so second nature to me that it’s a hard habit to break. I’m working on it, I swear, I absolutely swear that I am trying to fix this, to talk about things the way I should.
3. *“But that’s on me too, because I could have asked you why you seemed distant all of a sudden, and maybe it wouldn’t have gotten so far as it did...”

“…But you know, Mandy, we went from talking all the time and I know we still talk a heck of a lot but you know you used to text me in the mornings, we used to text and viber all the time and about everything and now it’s like maybe one will come in the afternoon or after other things or sometimes not at all, and I’m not saying that it can’t be like that or that it’s bad but that it’s different, it’s a change that just kind of happened overnight and it’s just again, I’ve never gone through this and I don’t know so I did wonder if it was something I had done, if there was something I could do to make things better, to make you want to talk to me again. In your letter you mentioned me doing the same thing when I’m drawing or coding but I’m not talking about being on aim and taking some extra time to respond, I’ve always understood that, you know, this is different and it’s hard, because you know, that conversation we had that Sunday, before you would have came back and said hey, sorry, I forgot my phone or the battery died, or just anything, and just you finally explained then and I understand and I’m trying to get used to it, okay, I promise.”

“…but sometimes you need to say things, sometimes I can’t be expected to guess or know what you are going through. I can understand needing space or needing to take a step back, but you have to understand that for me, sometimes I need you to say things.”

“…I need to be more patient, I really do and I do have a hard time trusting or believing things, even if they are the truth because without any follow-up.”*This I think right here is what I need to clarify, or at least explain better. I’ve always been an introvert, I’ve always spent time on my own, even with my best friends growing up, even with my roommates, they would invite me places and I’d stay home because I just didn’t have the mental fortitude to go out, or I just didn’t have the energy or for whatever reason. Someone once described it as “an introvert with outgoing tendencies;” meaning I love being with people, I love talking with people, I love going out, but I also need that alone time.

After I met you and we became friends, I shifted that. I changed things around, because I knew that you needed me to be there for you a lot, knew that you needed that reassurance that I was still there, that I cared about you, that I loved you. And I feel I need to point out here: you didn’t make me change, I didn’t do it because I had to, I did it because I *wanted* to, and because I knew that it was what you needed. I don’t have any regrets about that, I never once thought of it as a problem, or a hassle, or anything at all negative, that’s just how it was, and I was one hundred percent fine with changing my routine so I could make you happy. There was never any doubt in my mind that it was the right thing to do, because I love it when you’re happy, and your happiness makes me happy in return.

I have to disagree a little, though, on it happening “overnight.” I started shifting back to my old routine a little before Mom died, and granted it grew more pronounced after, but as much as you needed that reassurance I was still there, I needed that space to breathe – not from you, don’t get me wrong, it absolutely, has nothing to do with anything at all that you have said or done. I didn’t love you any less, I didn’t think *at all* that you were bothering me, I never once, ever, thought it was because talking to you was a pain, or anything of the sort. I used to wake up in the morning and go about my day with a certain attitude, a certain feeling. I’d excitedly text you, and we’d chat all day, and that was fine.

But that’s not easy for me anymore, and again, it’s not because of you, but because of Mom, because inevitably, everything comes back to that. I wake up in the mornings, and I need to just sometimes wander, do my own thing, stare mindlessly at the TV or a book or just something, and sometimes I just can’t bring myself to talk to people, and it’s again, it’s *not you.* It’s not because I think anything less of our friendship, or because I’ve grown tired of it, it’s not that at all, and I’ve tried explaining this before, I think, or maybe I didn’t or maybe it just came out all wrong, but I need that time to myself sometimes.

I’ve said before our minds don’t work similarly; yours, as you’ve told me in the past, you need that reassurance that I’m still there, and I’m happy to give it. But I’m not the same. I don’t need to talk to someone every day to know that I’m loved, and I’m not saying there is anything wrong with either mindset because there isn’t – that’s just how we’re, and many other, people are built, and there is literally nothing wrong with that, I’m absolutely not faulting you *whatsoever*, because I wouldn’t love you if you weren’t you. We each have different ways of expressing love and saying love and receiving love, but when it comes to us two, we just happen to have those different mindsets. I can go a few days without talking to someone, or only talk to someone in the evening, and still be very close to them, and it *never, ever means that I think of the friendship as less than what it is.* In fact, if there is one absolute facet of my personality that should be obvious, or blatant, or embarrassingly glaring, it’s my fierce loyalty, dedication, and ability to become attached to whatever I love. I *never* break up RP pairings unless the other person wants, because I get super attached to them (almost six years later, and I *still* am bitter about this one pairing that I had that I was dumped from in my Lunaria shop when I think about it). I *never* walk away from a friendship, unless the other person forces me to (i.e. my ex-friend Candice that I’ve talked about before, or the situation with Danse) – but even then, *even then,* I am still attached, because it *kills* me when things like that are broken. There are days when I *still* sit and get sad about my lost friendships, wishing they were back to what they used to be. Some people can say “screw ‘em” and just move on, but I’ve never been that way. It’s why Mom and I were as close as we were, why it’s been so devastatingly agonizing to try and move on without her. And you (I mean “you” here in a general term, not you specifically) *“Then why don’t you reach out more if you’re so attached?”* Well, because I have my own anxieties as well, my own awkwardness, my own lack of confidence, that shyness I never fully got over. I’ve said before, I’ve always, always been a very private person, it’s very hard for me to express myself and express myself properly; it’s something I still work on. But I will say that I have always said and shown how much I care, in many, many different ways, some of which aren’t even noticeable, and that’s absolutely fine, because you’ve done the same for me. We’ve both expressed how we felt, with different methods.

 You said that I seemed disinterested in the friendship, that for “the first time I was reaching out to you,” but Sam, *this* is where the communication disconnect is. The basic of basic facts is what I’ve said above. I reach out in different ways, but sometimes I don’t, and *it’s okay.* It doesn’t mean anything negative, it doesn’t mean I don’t trust you, it doesn’t mean I’m upset at you / avoiding you / angry at you / ignoring you. I’m still working on who I am, and so are you; we’re both works in progress.
4. *“…but it was just for the first time in a long time I felt like you were really interested in our friendship again, like I wasn’t just an afterthought or someone who would just always be there.”

“…so I was so mad at myself because I was like here is Mandy, finally reaching out to me and I screwed it up, you know?”*
Again, what I said above. And also, Sam, you don’t need to blame yourself for something like that, I was never angry or upset about that, just confused because I had thought you’d be more interested, which is why I asked about it. But I was never upset, and you didn’t ever “screw it up,” it was just a little blip.
5. *“…wondering if I was even allowed to be upset…I was terrified to even send you my letter, because I had no idea if I was even allowed to feel that way.”*
I don’t control you, Sam. Your emotions are what they are; you are the only person that can feel what you, Samantha Knowles, is feeling. If you feel a certain way, you feel that way. And I promise I’m not trying to brush this off, but it’s true; you are allowed to feel what you feel, I have no control or say over that, over you. I need you to know that, to know that your emotions are valid, because you are who you are, and even if I’m the cause of some painful emotions, it doesn’t mean you’re *not allowed* to feel a certain way, no one is allowed to tell anyone how they shouldn’t and shouldn’t feel. People feel what they feel, it’s as simple as that.
6. *“It’s because that’s knowledge is all I’ve had to fall back on, because for whatever reason you weren’t there or you couldn’t be there.”*I have always been here for you, Sam. That hasn’t changed. But I *can’t* be who I once was, who I was before Mom started going downhill. I’m not always going to be around as much as I was, I can’t promise that I will because I won’t, because I *can’t,* not yet at least; but it doesn’t mean that I’m not trying, that I’m not going to keep working to better myself, to try and do the best that I can to make sure that you know that. I’m learning how to take care of myself again, because I’ve spent the past ten years putting Mom as my priority, never myself, and I have zero regrets about that, or about putting those I love before me. But in the process I’ve lost some of myself, not through any fault but my own, and it’s not even really fault, it’s just how life has been, and I’ve been trying to take the time to find *me* again, and it’s not a fast, nor an easy process.

I remember a moment, right before my mom’s funeral. My Uncle Mark and I were standing in the kitchen of Aunt Traci’s house, and I remember Gabriel was sitting with Matthew and Uncle Jon, and they were talking about manly men things, and Uncle Mark had flown in from Seattle with a few of my cousins for the funeral. I’m not really close to any of my uncles, because I hardly see most of them (except Uncle Jon), but I stood there with a glass of water, and Uncle Mark, who is normally relatively sarcastic and dry witted, came and stood across from me. He said, very quietly, that he knew that for the past two years, since I graduated from college, I hadn’t done anything. No real job (other than a brief waitressing and a brief substitute teaching stint), no grad school, no marriage, no babies, no nothing except living at home with my mom and three siblings. He told me, gently and kindly, that he knew the stigma of adults living at home with their parents, even if my situation was different, that he knew it must have been hard, exhausting, frustrating, and lonely living far away from the majority of my friends. And he asked if I regretted anything, if I wished that I had been able to move out sooner, or that I’d had closer friends, or that I’d lived elsewhere, gone to school, gotten a real career, moved on with my life.

I remember I looked him straight in the eye and said, “No. I regret nothing. And for the first time in my life, I feel like I can do anything I want. I wish Mom hadn’t died so that I could, but for the first time, in a long time, I feel like I can go and do things, that I can learn how to be an adult, that I can learn what it means to be Mandy Abramson.”

He looked at me, smiled, and went, “Good. I feel the same for you. And I have never been prouder of you.”

I don’t regret changing my routine in order to make Mom happy, to make you happy, to put the people I love and cherish before me. There are no regrets, no doubts that I did what was right, that making sure that the love and support that surrounded me was constant. I’ve had people tell me before that I don’t ever seem to realize how truly special or kind or good I am, and admittedly, I don’t often. Aunt Traci has told me multiple times that when she looks at me, she sees all of my potential; and Mom used to tell me that she looked at me and saw so much, but that when I looked at myself, I seemed not to see anything much of anything, and that it broke her heart that I couldn’t see myself the way she did. It makes me sad that I made her sad that way, that I’ve made you, or anyone, sad or hurt. That sort of thing I can’t change now, because it’s in the past, but I *can* change myself and start anew, and start to build things up from the ground once more. Friendships are never as easy as people make them out to be, at least good ones aren’t, but working *for* them and working *through* the messes is what makes them special, makes them stronger, builds them up to everything that they can be.

This is not an end, Sam; by no means is this where things go wrong and can’t be fixed. This is a just a transition for us, I feel, just a stepping stone, a tangle of knots that, when untangled, will help bring us to the right place, even though it’s hard and it’s painful in places. And I hope it doesn’t sound like I’m making excuses or trying to justify things or go in circles, but I genuinely believe that working through this together, doing the best that we can together to improve ourselves and work on what we need to together, that it’ll make things stronger. You are a wonderful, incredibly intelligent, incredibly talented woman who is just bursting with love and possibilities and potential and ability, and I have no doubt in my mind whatsoever that you will do great things with your life, that you absolutely have the capability to do what you want to do. And I will support you through whatever happens, I will love you through whatever happens, and that will never change, regardless of whatever struggles we face, whatever we go through that’s hard for either of us, and there is no doubt that it’s the same for you as well; that you will love and support me, that we will love and support each other, help build each other up as much as we can, because that’s what best friends are for; that is what we do.