Slowly, but steadily. *“And part of me doesn’t understand where this change is heading, you know.”*
Neither do I. I know nothing right now except where I am currently.

*“I know you have said over and over that you needing space has nothing to do with me…”*

It doesn’t.

*“…but part of me worries that on some level it does, and part of me worries that I am the only one you are pulling back from that you feel like you can’t talk to...”*
You’re not.

*“…and that is what threatens to devastate me, that’s what eats me up inside, that someone has not replaced but become that person for you, that I used to be, that person that you can find the strength to change your routine for.”*

Like I said in my last letter, I don’t just replace people, and even if you said that it’s not replacing, you’re still implying a little that I’m just going to substitute someone in your stead, and I’ve already tried to say I don’t do this. Your emotions are what they are, your feelings are what they are, and I know it’s not easy to change that mindset, I absolutely, one hundred percent know; but please rest assured that I have not ever replaced you, nor have I ever tried or ever wanted to.

*“I’m just saying that this is my fear, that my feelings are here and that yours have not changed but moved to someone else and I know it’s selfish and uncalled for but it’s just something I have to be honest about if we are going to move forward….”*
I have people I talk to. I have people I don’t talk to. I don’t have a therapist right now, in spite of needing one, and as much as I love and support and respect and adore you, you can’t be my therapist for me, and I wouldn’t want you to be, that’s way too much pressure on you, and I don’t want to make you carry my burdens for me, even if you wanted to. There are some things that I *can’t* talk about with you, to almost *anyone,* because I can’t say the words or find the words, so I talk about them with Mama Flake, who lost her own mother two years ago to terminal illness and who understands what I’m going through. Or I talk to Anne, or Matthew, or Aunt Traci, because they’re my family, they’re the closest thing that I have to Mom now that she’s gone, and because we all share that same grief. I talk to them about certain things so that I *can* talk to you about things, so that I can learn to open up and be more engaging, so that I can find the right words to talk to you.

But like I’ve already said, I don’t put people on levels. You are already irreplaceable. I talk to you about things that I *don’t* talk to other people about, that I *only* talk to you about, and that to me is why we’re best friends, why we’ve been as close as we have been, because I know I *can* talk to you about those things and vice versa.

And for the record, you were the only person that I wanted to come down and help me move, and you very kindly and lovingly did, which I have never not been grateful for.

*“…and it hurts that you don’t think of them too, not because you mean to, or that you aren’t trying or that our friendship is anything less but just that it hurts.”*I know it hurts. I know. And I’m so, so very sorry that it does, and I wish with all my heart that it didn’t. But I’m not *not* thinking about things because I don’t care but because *my brain simply does not work the same way as yours.* I’m *not* always going to be on the same wavelength or the same level, just like you’re not always going to be on mine, and like I’ve said, there *isn’t* anything wrong with that, with either method, it’s *just how our minds and our bodies are.* I can’t change that, not overnight, not immediately, maybe not ever. That’s *just* how I am as a person. I am not in any way deliberately setting out to hurt you, and I know that I am, I know that you’re hurting, and that kills me, but even though it hurts me that you’re hurting, that I’m the cause of it, I can’t change who I am so easily. Maybe if I had a therapist or I was on medication like I should be, it would be easier, but it’s not, and I have to learn to manage my own thoughts, and it’s *never* easy, just like it’s not easy for you.

*“Because I want to share a hotel room with you, I want to share a side of the room with you, a bed, a pile of our stuff, to have dinners where I’m not at the opposite end of the table from you, to go hunt for HQ merch and manga, and it’s not anything other than just that I know they are silly meaningless little things but it’s these little things that mean something to me, because you are my best friend and I want to share them with you but I also don’t want to smother you, I don’t want you to think that you can’t go off alone with Facey or Grey and do things, or anyone, it’s not that I think you need to babysit me or need to be with me all the time, it’s just that, it’s like you said, we show our love differently sometimes  but just last year you know, we didn’t get to do a lot of those things together.”*

Please in no way think that I for one second don’t want to spend time with you. In fact, I already told more than one person that I was sharing a room with you and that I planned on wandering around looking for HQ stuff with you, because it’s something very important to me. But Sam, it’s *because* I don’t talk to these people as much as I talk with you that I like going and I like hanging with them as well, and it’s not that because I talk to you a lot that I don’t want to hang out with you either, because that’s *not* true whatsoever. The point of AN is to goof off with a group of good friends who all love and support each other together, but I loved the fact that I also got separate time to hang with you before and after, that I got *extra* time to spend with you, because that was what we wanted and looked forward to. And yes, we didn’t get a whole lot of time during the con to hang out, so I was *really* looking forward to changing that this year, to being able to squish along the floors together, to look at merchandise together, to do a whole crapload of things together, and maybe I should have said that more, maybe I should have shown it more, and if I ever gave you the impression that I wasn’t absolutely 100% looking forward to doing everything and anything with you at the con, then I’m so terribly sorry for that, because it’s never been the case that I *wasn’t* excited. There is no question in my mind that I want to spend time with you, that I’m super excited to hang out with my best friend Sam and do all the things that you’ve already mentioned, there has *never* been any doubt in mind that I have and always am *thrilled* at every chance I get to spend time with you *because* we *are* best friends. And I know you’ve made up with Facey, but I also sometimes feel like I can’t talk about her, or Grey, or decide to go off with one of them, without you getting sad about it, and I don’t want to make you sad, but it’s just been a point I haven’t been sure on myself, because it’s not like I’ve decided to replace you with either one of them, or with anyone else. My friendships with them and with others are different, not better, not worse, *just* different. Yours and my friendship is special, that will never change for me.

*“I’m not asking for you to change or do anything.”*

But Sam, you are, whether you realize it or not, and I don’t think you do, and it might just be me reading it wrongly, and if I am, then I am very sorry. But it seems like, at certain points, you do want me to go back to the person that I was before, to be the person that I used to be, and I can’t do that. I can’t, as much as I want to tell you that I can, as much as I want to go back and be that person again, I can’t. I don’t know who I am anymore, I’m trying to find myself again, and in order to do that, I have to be honest with myself. What I *want* doesn’t always cooperate with what I *need*, and it’s frustrating and it’s hard, but I have to put my mental health first and foremost.

*“I talk to you about Lynn and Lil and Courtney and just because I do, just because they are my friends too absolutely doesn’t lessen my love or friendship with you and it doesn’t mean that anyone else can ever, ever fill the place I have for you in my heart.”*

This is just it, though. I’ve never doubted that you’ll never replace me, that your love for me is endless and that you will always be there for me, and you’ve never had to remind me of this, I already know it, because I know you, because I’ve gotten to know you over these past few years. But it’s not the same for you, and I know that. I know that your mind works differently than mine, that you need more reassurance than I do, and that’s okay. I’ve always been willing to give that reassurance, usually verbally, but sometimes in other ways.

*“And just, that’s it; I’m not sure where to go from here. I’m not sure what’s okay to do, what’s not, I’m not sure what you want from me aside from patience and understanding and you know that I am and always have given and been willing to give that to you, no matter what. But I don’t know if it’s okay to message you, to talk to you, and it’s not because you have ever said that I can’t or that you don’t want me to but because this is all new for me, I’m relearning everything, I’m having to change things that I thought I knew about us but I didn’t and it’s not bad, it’s not anything just that I don’t know what is going to happen and I’m terrified but I absolutely don’t want to do anything to make things worse, to make things a step back when we have worked so hard to move forward.”*

I understand that this is a learning process for the both of us, that we’re both struggling to find the middle ground now that things are changing. All I’m asking, all that I’ve been trying to say, is that if you message me and I take some time to respond, that you understand that the reasoning has nothing to do with you personally, that I’m not angry, or upset, or irritated, or ignoring you; but that I’m simply trying to do something for myself, whether it’s just learn to breathe again, or maybe I’m watching a movie or reading a book. All I want and need right now is that patience and that understanding that, yes, while things are changing, my love for you hasn’t and won’t, and that sometimes when you message me, I might take a bit to respond, but it’s *never* because I don’t want to, but because I *can’t,* because I’m working through some things and need a bit of time and space. That’s all right now.

I don’t know where I’m going from here, Sam. I don’t even know what I’m having for dinner, let alone what I’m doing tomorrow. Friendships change over time, grow and develop while still maintaining their core values, and that’s what’s most important, is that even if things change and develop, they’re changing and developing to something better, stronger, more pronounced. **This has never not been important to me, Sam. You have never not been important to me.** It’s *because* it’s so cherished and important to the both of us that we’re sitting writing these letters to each other in the first place. It’s *because* we want the best for each other and ourselves that we’re trying to do our best and make things work the way they’re supposed to that we’re doing all we can to progress.

This time is just a little bit of soul searching for the both of us, as emotional, painful, and hard as it might be. I hate, *hate* truly hate that I’ve hurt you, but I’m still here, I’m still trying to fight for this because it’s important and because I *know* that we can both work through it, I know we can, I know you and I are both capable of growing together and working through it to break through to the other side. You will always, always be my best friend forever, goober, weenie, Sam, and I know I should have taken more time to reassure you of that, but it’s never been doubtful in my mind, not once.