

A Break Up Letter to Stagedoor Manor

Dear Stagedoor Manor,

I know this is weird, because I feel like you don't know me as well as I know you. But I think I started to fall in love with you the first day I stepped on Karmel Road, and saw the black and white sign in the original handwriting that said "Stagedoor Manor" but meant "You'll Find Something Here You Won't Find Anywhere Else. This is Home." Well, at least that's how I read it.

I realize now, in hindsight, that I've been falling in love ever since. With you, my best friend family, The Liberty Diner, the one movie theater 45 minutes away, free swim, how comforting it is to be woken up by, "Hey, Hey, Stagedoor!", bagel day and the dining room and how there was always honey for your tea.

I visited you a few times and admired from afar until I decided to make you mine. I was done with the coy flirting and pretending there was nothing going on between us. Let's be real, you felt it too.

And then the next four years flew. And this is when we really got to know each other. I had known you for many years before we actually got together, but during the time we were together, you'd see me make mistakes, have my best day ever, laugh until it hurt. I shared with you my secrets. You saw me stay up watching every version of "Spark of Creation" on YouTube in existence. You saw the boy I liked call me pretty at lunch. You saw my hair straight, curly, you saw it in braids. You saw me with make up on, you saw me without it (and you made me feel beautiful no matter which was the case). I'm pretty sure you watched me fall in love. You saw me cry when camp ended, you saw me cry when I was scared I was getting sick and I couldn't miss Camper Showcase. You saw me cry out of frustration when I needed to go home for a day, but you saw the hugs I got when I came back.

You watched me on the day I met my best friends before I knew they'd be my best friends. You gave me so many impromptu lunch dates in Manhattan. You knew before I did that they'd stand at my wedding, some of them would take my memorable firsts, one of them would take me on the best first date of my life, and you knew if I liked red or yellow throat coat when I forgot.

You are the definition of "No Strangers, Just Future Friends." And I miss the feeling of familiarity and acceptance everywhere I looked, even if I knew no one.

And then you told me what OTC was. And when I left the stage after my last three knocks and wave, I didn't know how badly I wished I could have that feeling in a bottle to drink when I was sad, or look at when I was on my way to loneliness. I said OTC was my soup. You heard that. And I said it fills me up when I know I need a little more but I'm not sure what would do it. But it's that killer combination of red, black and white, and the killer harmony and stunning movement—both emotional and physical. It's something I could just eat and eat and eat, and almost never get sick of. It is what makes my heart sing.

I don't know how to say this without haste, but now you're gone. I'll be brutally honest and tell you there are some days it pours and I just want to walk into the Cabaret Lobby and see my friends playing ping pong and a little part of my heart feels like it's tearing away when I realize I can't. There are some nights it's so clear you can see all the stars and I want to walk to the canteen and back just because I can. But I can't.

It's okay, I promise. I will appreciate you forever, and I am forever changed by what you did for me - who you made me, what you taught me I could be, and the way I can point to you and say that is why my life is better now.

You have given me more people I can call my family. You have taught me not just proper vocal treatment, but how to be a friend. I remember why Disney Princesses are so special to little girls. I have learned how a week without your phone really isn't that long at all when almost everyone you need is right there with you. I have learned that the rules do change when you get older... easier to bend. I have learned that I don't have the same three weeks to look forward to every year anymore, but when I put my head to my pillow at night (sometimes at sleepovers cuddling with people I met through you!), what we had together will stay in my heart forever. No one will touch that or take it away.

And because of that, I will love you for the rest of my life.

Love, Jordan

PS: I know this seems really final, but if you wanted me back, I'd be down to talk about it over coffee.