

Written & designed by  
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A photograph of a woman with dark hair in a high ponytail, shown in profile from the chest up. She is wearing a dark, textured top, a multi-strand pearl necklace, and a pearl earring. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light purple or lavender color. The text 'the Young Professional' is overlaid on the image in a white serif font.

the  
Young  
Professional

REFLECTIONS ON TWO YEARS  
AMONG THE STARS



## *00. About the Girl*

This tale has been told at many times in many ways, via paper or mouth or keyboard. But it's a story that bears repeating because it points to the God of the world, the Savior of the universe who intimately cares about each one of His children and promises to bring them into His perfect will.

Fall 2020.

The world was shut down, but somehow time continued racing by. I found myself fast approaching graduation. I'd wanted to be a graphic designer since I was 12, and knowing that I was so close was strangely anticlimactic. Was I more in love with school than I was with my major? Would I actually have a job by graduation?

I applied to a job as a joke, since my dad watched their videos on YouTube. But less than two days later, the HR manager wrote back with words that would change my life:

“Would you be willing to relocate to LA?”

I chuckled, not even entertaining the thought. Oh well, another rejection. I'd continue my search elsewhere.

But when I told my mom and dad about the email, they asked me another life changing question: “Why not?”

I'd never been to California before. In fact, I'd barely been outside of the south in my short

21 years of life. Moving to a city I only knew about from glimpses in movies and mentions in books was crazy . . . right?

My dad helped me find an apartment. My aunt helped me LA-ify my wardrobe. My mom bought me pots and pans.

Before I knew it, I'd accepted the job offer and was planning a crosscountry roadtrip to a state most people around me only mentioned to crack jokes about.

Two nights before, I nearly lost my resolve to go. This opportunity had sneaked up on me—I'd been planning on staying at home for a couple more years, probably never even leaving Greenville.

I hadn't had time to prepare. To grieve. But maybe that was for the best.

I would never again wake up on a lazy Saturday morning and scrounge around the house for an adventure buddy. I'd never again sit down at the table with my mom for three hours to detail the minutes of my day at school.

No more movie marathons with Rachel. No more random trips to the store or "fun runs" to fast food places.

Greenville wasn't mine anymore.

God asked me to trust Him. "You've spent so many years trying to grow your ministry, telling girls around you to trust God. Well, will

you actually walk the walk? If I ask you, like Abraham, to go to an unknown land—will you go?"

And I said yes. Because if my crazy (and often heartbreaking) years at college had taught me anything, it was that I needed to live with open hands.

That would allow God to, yes, take at times . . . but He only takes the things that don't belong in our lives, that don't draw us closer to Him. And our good God also gives. He gives grace and wisdom and comfort and purpose and peace, if we only live with fingers unclasped.

I was saved at a young age. But my sanctification only began then. The journey has continued in my deep, dark moments. In the moments when God asks me to trust, to let go, to give, to grieve.

God's journey for my life brought me to California. In these update letters, sent about once a month during December 2020 to December 2022, you will hear about God's goodness in my life and the good gifts He's blessed me with out here.

I pray it inspires you to jump wholeheartedly and almost recklessly into whatever God has prepared for your life. I can guarantee it's better than whatever you have planned.

*with love,*  
*Amanda Michelle Brown*

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## 01. *City of Stars* 12.26.20

I'm in the city of stars.

### WHY AM I WRITING?

Hi, guys! It's Amanda Brown, writing you from sunny LA. I added you guys to this list because you are the important people in my life, and I didn't want to lose touch with you! If you want to unsubscribe, however, feel free to at any time; no hard feelings.

### THE UPDATE

It's hard to sum up the past 16 days (Did I say 16??? Have I really been here for 16 days?). When we arrived, my heart was pumping and my legs were shaking from being on the 404 with crazy Californians.

Now I've already signed up for electricity and paid for internet, located phone jacks, driven on the 404 about eight times, and also burned a wire on a toaster . . . but let's forget that part.

I've also learned how to share my faith in the right way according to the situation; to pray before meals when people around me are already biting into their sandwiches. To politely decline alcohol—to declare my faith in a way that is kind but definite.

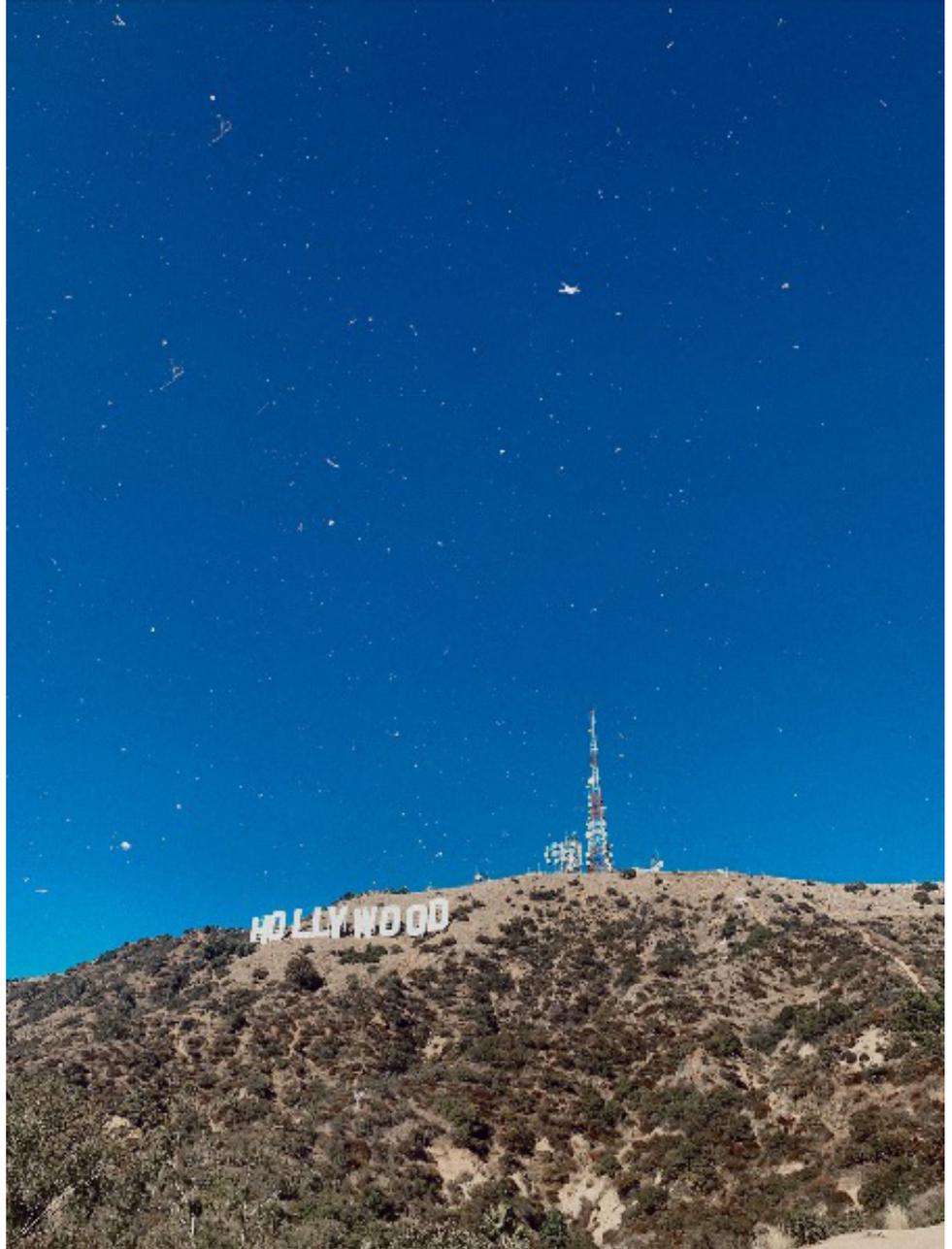
My coworkers and boss are really nice. It's definitely a different culture than Greenville, but they have quickly accepted me into their “family” and respect my standards.

Today, I visited a church by myself. I prayed on the way that it would be obvious if I should attend this church; I asked God to have them take me under their wing and show me that they are interested in discipling me. And, wow—He answered big time!!

My mom keeps telling me that people are praying for me and it really does mean more than words can explain. So here are some prayer requests, if you would like to keep me in your prayers.

### PRAYER REQUESTS

1. I got to drive a girl from work to an event today. The ride was an hour and a half both ways, so we had some really good conversations. She heard about my magazine and said she “isn't really religious but isn't against it” and asked if I would share the link with her so she can give it to her Christian friends. I'm hoping I can be a light to her and maybe we'll have some good discussions about my faith.
2. Safety, both at work and at my apartment. Due to the nature of my job and just the fact that I'm a single girl living in LA, I'm just a wee bit nervous.
3. Steadfastness in my standards and spiritual disciplines. Please pray that I don't waver in what I believe and that I also keep up with devotions, prayer, and church.



## *02. The Storm inside Their Hearts* 1.4.21

### *Contents:*

01. THE FACADE

02. AN OPPORTUNITY

03. PRAYER REQUESTS

### 01. THE FACADE

Los Angeles is perpetually sunny.

Here, people run to the windows when it's raining and smash their noses against the glass like little kids looking into a toy store. They marvel at the dark skies and the strange puffs riding through the air like packs of smoky orcas.

And yet, I find the sky in stark contrast with the people. My unsaved friend from work even has noticed that people in LA look . . .

miserable.

I narrow this misery down to how superficial their lives are; they have everything Hollywood says they need to be happy . . . but why then do they feel so sad inside?

*LA is an attempt at the American dream that got sidetracked by the lust of this world.*

I did some research before I got here and was shocked that people said to stay away from Hollywood. It's dirty and dangerous now. I couldn't help but think how that parallels the whole entertainment industry here: covered in glitter and gold, but being eaten away by acid underneath.

## 02. AN OPPORTUNITY

On New Year's Eve, I went to Gillian's apartment and we spent a quiet night eating pizza and watching movies. We were invited (multiple times) to a "party in Beverly Hills," which I assumed meant trouble. Gillian was kind enough to stick with our plan for the quiet night in. I couldn't help but thank God that I'm a Christian; that night could have been a very dangerous introduction to adulthood.

The next day, we hiked to the Hollywood sign. Gillian and I talked for 4 hours. I am committed to showing her that I care about her as a person and not "hitting her over the head with the Bible," if I may use that phrase. However, she did bring up that she doesn't know if she believes in climate change. I saw that as an opportunity to share that I already know how the world is going to end (with Jesus taking His people to heaven).

She was very polite and respectful but didn't ask any further questions. She did already comment that I'm "very strong in my faith," so I know that she's paying attention to how I act.

## 03. PRAYER REQUESTS

1. I've never handled my own finances before, so just wisdom in budgeting, saving, and spending.
2. I believe I found a good church (Faith Baptist in Canoga Park), but because of COVID it's very hard to get to know people. Please pray that this introvert can get outside of her shell and still get to know people despite things like masks and limited church activities!



## 03. *Your Someday is TODAY* 1.25.21

*Contents:*

01. DIFFERENCES

02. ROUTINE

03. PRAYER REQUESTS

### 01. DIFFERENCES

It seems like every email I send you guys will begin with something about LA that is different from home.

This week, it's the hills. I was driving to church and got distracted by a very good phone conversation with my mom . . . I missed my exit but stumbled upon these beautiful Californian hills.

At home, everything is green. But in California, everything is yellow (my uncle says they prefer to say "golden" but . . . yeah

that's not quite the word). Frothy bushes cover these YELLOW hills; it honestly makes me think of a guy with a bushy beard that needs to shave.

Yet there's something mesmerizing about these gold-spun mounds. They're as gentle as clouds, as soft as the ocean. Something about them makes your eyes so at ease. They call for adventure.

## 02. ROUTINE

I spent all summer dreaming about what my morning routine would be like when I was out on my own someday. I'd wake up at 5 to watch the sun rise, pray for an hour, do devotions, take a walk with a dog (whom I've decided I will name Oso, which is Spanish for bear . . . well, when he exists), make waffles, stretch, and then go to work.

But . . . well, that hasn't really happened.

Aren't we so funny? We like to think about "some day." We like to tell ourselves that if we can just get "there" we'll finally go on that hike, take that vacation, wake up at that time, do those workouts.

Dear one, the time is now. I can tell you this: moving 2000 miles away does not necessarily change a heart . . . or a wakeup time.

## 03. PRAYER REQUESTS

1. I'm an unofficial member of a church finally! I just have to be voted in by the church family.
2. Good connections. Not many people at work are Christians, and getting to know people at church is hard because of COVID. I really miss my beautiful Christian community back home.

# 04. *Perhaps This Is Why* 2.19.21

*Contents:*

01. HIBERNATION

02. PERHAPS THIS IS WHY

## 01. HIBERNATION

California is waking up.

The sun is staying out longer, the heat more of a friend than just a memory. If the weather deigns to dip below 65, you'll find these western vagabonds cuddled up in puffy black coats and stylish tie-dye jogger sets.

But the sun isn't the only thing out: the hobos have appeared, more than I've seen as of yet. They stand outside of the interstates, buzzing to and from cars like bees, holding flowers. It makes me so, so sad.

*Some of them talk to friends long gone, eyes wild and far away.*

Others sit at the bus stop, waiting for something that will never come.

Hibernation is over.

## 02. PERHAPS THIS IS WHY

I've never taken an unsaved friend/coworker to church before.

Back in Greenville, all my friends were Christians (you know how it is). But here, Christianity cannot be taken for granted. So when God burdened me to invite my sweet friend, I knew I had to obey. I was nervous the whole day, thinking about how to propose the idea to her.

I pitched it as a lovely Galentine's Day, because who doesn't want that? We'd go to



church and have coffee and sing songs; then we'd get takeout and watch a movie. I was shocked when she said yes before I even got through my whole plan.

SHE. LOVED. IT. My heart was so full by the time I left her to go back to my apartment.

After Sunday School, she just breathed out and looked at me with a softness in her eyes I haven't seen yet. "That was so . . . sweet."

I'm empathetic, so I felt as if I were experiencing church for the first time with her. The joy and peace and "how have I missed this??" came rushing over me, and I teared up during the service so many times. After the main service, she couldn't stop talking about how she felt like this was the thing that she'd needed to ground her. She asked if she could come back next week (to which I said OF COURSE!!!). "Can I come back again? I think I want to do this every week . . . yeah. Sunday School. And the main service too. Yeah, I should do both."

I had a front-row seat to God softening her heart and smiling upon her. It was S T U N N I N G. I wanted her to answer the altar call so badly, but she wasn't quite ready. When we got back to the car, she wanted to keep talking. She told me that it was so weird, but she felt like all her life she'd been put with Christians. Back home she had a Christian cousin, in school she had a Christian friend, and now here in CA she had me. I told her

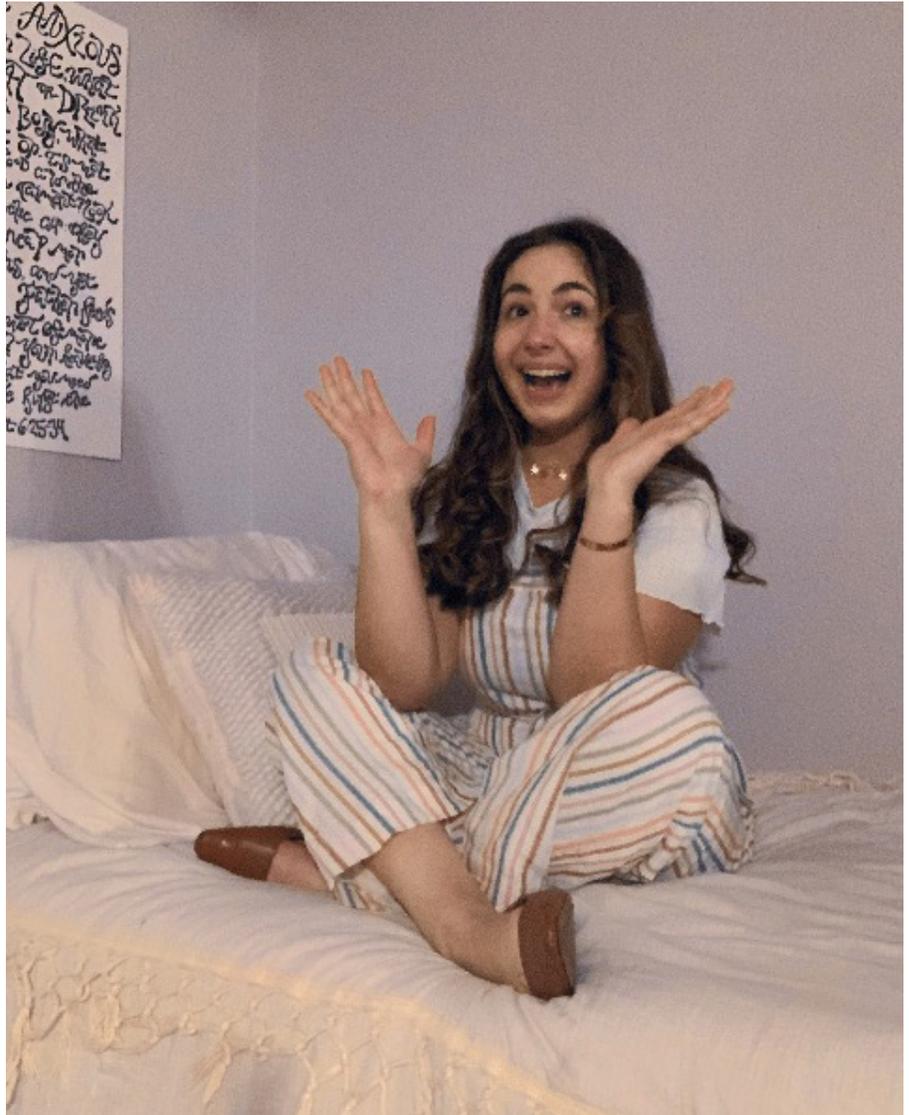
that God was working in her heart and if she had any questions, I would love to help. Three days later, I was able to give her a Bible.

I just finished up a study in the book of Esther, and I couldn't help but feel a connection to the queen unlike I ever had before. As I read the words "Perhaps you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this," it was as if I heard God breathing those words over me: "Perhaps you have come to this place for such a task as this."

The thought whooshed over me: if I hadn't come to California, my sweet friend would not have experienced church on Valentines Day of 2021. If I moved 2000 miles away "just" for this, then I'd say that is DEFINITELY worth it.

### 03. PRAYER REQUESTS

1. Please continue praying for Gillian's salvation! I think she's very close. Please pray that her heart continues to be softened and that God uses me to answer any questions she has and point her in His direction with love and clarity.
2. Because of that AMAZING experience I had witnessing to Gillian, I feel on fire to continue witnessing to my other coworkers. Please pray for opportunities to talk to them about my faith and maybe even invite them to church too!



## 05. *If Not Me, Than No One* 3.10.21

### *Contents:*

- 01. A STUNNING OBSERVATION
- 02. THE MONSTER IN THE CLOST

### 01. A STUNNING OBSERVATION

When one lives alone, one must do . . . all the things.

From laundry to dishes to taking the car to the dealer to making eye appointments, if I don't do these monotonous yet necessary tasks, no one will!

Similarly, if you don't do certain things in your life, it's not going to happen. We like to blame other people for our problems or wait until the perfect moment and the perfect circumstances but, dear friend: the only thing

standing in your way is you.

Because, at the end of the day, if you aren't happy with your story . . . it's time to pick up the pen (so to speak) and take charge again. Writing a story in conjunction with God always yields the best results, as does picking quality companions and secondary characters to color up the periphery of your story.

## 02. THE MONSTER IN THE CLOSET

I am officially a hiking maniac. Someone quipped that there's nothing special about it—after all, it's “just” walking—but I beg to differ.

*If I believed in reincarnation,  
I'd be certain that I used to be a  
sunflower.*

Even as a child, I remember opening the windows before I started school for the day (it was like I was powering up). If I ever took an afternoon nap, those windows would be open and I'd be soaking up the rays like a feline.

Even as I was envisioning my job, one of the biggest pros was that the HR lady told me my office had giant windows. “Well, if the office has giant windows, surely I can move to LA . . .”

So, when the new girl showed up at work and God poked at my heart to reach out to her, I offered to hike with her. So, this past weekend Gillian and I extended our friend group by

hiking with her and another girl.

I must be honest: jealousy has been a huge monster in my closet the past year. So, to thoroughly kick this ghoul back to its resting place, I've sought to make connections with (in particular) the young women around me.

I'm naturally a one-on-one person too; but God pricked my heart. “What if I'm giving you an opportunity to witness to even more people? Stop seeing such small possibilities.”

Just texting this girl with “Do you want to go hiking this weekend?” challenged two petty thoughts and beliefs I had about myself. I encourage you to actively challenge things in your life too!! Maybe you KNOW you're giving in to jealousy. Find ways to throw it out! Maybe you hide behind being an introvert. Make bigger friend groups!

We weren't created to be static.

## 03. PRAYER REQUESTS

1. Please pray as there are at least three girls whom I can be actively witnessing to (in addition to Gillian). Please pray that I am a good example to them and know how involved I should be in their lives!
2. I want to be reaching out to more people. It's hard to know what that looks like exactly, and I tend to be lazy about this. So probably pray I get a kick in the pants haha . . . and some divine ideas about how to serve.

# 06. *A New Witnessing Opportunity*

3.22.21



## Contents:

01. NO MISTAKES

02. ANOTHER ONE

### 01. NO MISTAKES

Was I making a mistake?

About two weeks before moving to LA was even on my radar, God started putting the city on my mind with two podcasts run by women who live in LA. Both of them gave a very dreary perspective; one said that she had got in with the wrong crowd and fallen away from Christ (she eventually moved away because she couldn't deal with the pressure). On the other podcast, the girls were just very worldly.

I hate to say it, but I was definitely looking down on these girls.

*If these women couldn't handle the pressure, how could I even hope to be different?*

Now I understand the pressure to conform. The people at work are so kind and inclusive. Yet I remember sitting at a restaurant with them, suddenly feeling overwhelmed: yes, I was included in this group ... but was it the right group? These people who spoke of politics and superficial things for four hours? These people who thought a good Friday night included bar hopping until midnight? I saw myself becoming that lady on the podcast.

And yet ... I wasn't. I don't always have to hang out with them, yet I feel called to make my presence known every now and then. To hold the conversation to a higher standard, to show them my joy, to tell them about my Christian magazine and see them nod with respect. This is my community, the place God has placed me.

And, armed with my church community and daily Bible study and lots and lots of prayer, I know that I can be in the world and yet not

of it.

### 02. ANOTHER ONE

We just hired a new influencer and, through that friend group I mentioned in the previous paragraph, I was able to meet her outside of work. We clicked since she also relocated here from the south.

I was watching one of her YouTube videos and she mentioned that she is "searching for where I am on the religion spectrum." I happened to have her phone number so I literally paused the video, said a prayer, and texted her right there and then. I told her I'd seen the video and her statement, and that I was a Christian and I would love for her to join me and Gillian at church on a Sunday.

I was getting goosebumps and all the nerves—this girl has thousands of TikTok followers and is already very popular at work. Would she think I'm weird? Would she say no? I had such a burden to share my Christianity with her before Satan could snatch up her good intentions (I just read that passage in Mark about the seeds and didn't want her to be the seed that is "snatched away by the ravens"! ). She said she'd like to come one Sunday, so I have a foot in the door. This was SUCH a blessing and like another burst of spiritual energy for me.

### 03. PRAYER REQUESTS

1. Please pray that my new friend will follow through and actually come to church with me!! (And that I can remind her in a non-annoying way if she doesn't, haha)
2. Please pray that I can have a really upfront conversation with Gillian about salvation. She's been to church with me probably five times now so she KNOWS the truth but there hasn't been any followthrough.



## 07. *I Didn't Do Enough Today* 4.27.20

### *Contents:*

01. I DIDN'T DO ENOUGH YESTERDAY

02. OUTLET

### 01. I DIDN'T DO ENOUGH YESTERDAY

Do you ever have days where you know you just didn't do enough?

Weekends are actually when I get a lot of the GRIMY chores done. I leave mopping the floors, doing laundry, and meal prepping on Saturdays/Sundays to cancel out all the much-needed relaxing I also do (after 3-hour long hikes).

So yesterday (Sunday), I was quite overwhelmed. I'd left a lot of my to-do list for Sunday evening. It was 11:30 and I decided to just take a break. To laugh a little at how

much I'd procrastinated, to promise I'd catch up tomorrow and do better next weekend.

I've been here for almost five months now. I'm not much of a routine person, so the monotonous laundry, cleaning the shower, buying groceries, and doing meal prep are losing their glitz and glamor.

It's okay if sometimes you need to break out of the routine. And it's okay if you didn't do enough today. Take time to look at your to-do list: do you HAVE to exercise tonight? Do you HAVE to read that book? Do you HAVE to post that perfect Instagram post?

*Maybe just this one night, for once, you don't need to overachieve.*

It's okay if you break your Duolingo streak or don't get to the dishes. I have a personal rule that I never let my dishes sit overnight!! But, there have been a few nights when I just need



some chill time and, whoops, I'm climbing in bed only to realize the dishes are still in the sink.

They'll wait for tomorrow.

## 02. OUTLET

As you may have seen from the photo at the top of this email, I've taken to photography! It is SO relaxing. I've done it on and off since high school, but I've never really called myself a photographer.

There is nothing so relaxing and yet invigorating as photography, at least for me. I love having a vision in my head: maybe it's just a concept or even a simple object the model will hold.

It's also so cool to always be watching out for a cool shoot location. I've been passing this

field of yellow flowers for weeks now, and I finally got to do a shoot there. Come to find out, it's actually a pretty popular LA filming location!!

What sparks your creativity? What keeps you creating, thinking, learning? We all need a hobby like this. I hope you have one too!

## 03. PRAYER REQUESTS

1. Gillian hasn't been going to church, and I'm still really burdened for her as she feels lost in LA. Please pray I can have a good conversation with her about what church is really about: not just attendance.
2. I'm going to be going on a vacation for a week! This is super exciting, but that also means I have to get ahead on a lot for work.



## 08. *We All Have to Do Laundry Sometimes* 5.24.21

### *Contents:*

01. HOME AGAIN

02. CONTRAST

### 01. HOME AGAIN

Only two weeks ago, I was back home.

We'd been planning this trip since even before I came out to California, and it was anchor for me in my first few days out here. I knew, if I just stayed faithful and went one day at a time, I'd be able to go home and see my family again. The trip was amazing. I didn't have to cook for seven blissful days, didn't have to do laundry, didn't have to stare at a screen for 8 hours.

I honestly didn't expect coming back to California to be so hard. But it was also good: because life can't all be meals cooked by mom, walks on the beach, Cary Grant marathons, and making walnut sticky rolls.

We all have to do our laundry sometimes.

### 02. CONTRAST

There's nothing quite like conversation with a fellow Christian, especially when you aren't usually with people who have the same values as you. I got to hike with a church friend this Saturday, and it was SO cool to talk to her for over five hours about God. I've missed that.

We did a pretty intense hike which climaxed with a very steep, rocky climb up to stacks of rocks. I climbed up onto the rocks (SO FUN WHAT IS A HIKE WITHOUT ROCK CLIMBING?! My life is forever changed.) and then we just sat there, two little birds transplanted from our homes to this strange city. On our left, the silver buildings of LA sparkled like the City of Stars it is, contrasted by the view on the right: peaceful, urban Simi Valley, which isn't as garish as LA. And, in between, the golden rocks and brush of the California wilderness.

We must've sat there for forty minutes, just marveling in the beauty. I hope it's forever accessible in my head, a perfect postcard view of a state that's just fallen on bad times (and haven't we all sometimes?).



## 09. *Forbidden Knowledge* 6.27.21

### 01. INNOCENCE—A LOST VALUE

Innocence is an often overlooked value.

The world laughs at it. The world sees it as something to be ashamed of, something to be taken or given away as soon as possible.

I know at work I'm the innocent one. I neither get the jokes nor make the jokes; I don't have stories about dates gone wrong or parties gone haywire.

And, for a mere second, I felt bad about that. I was the homeschooler who hadn't lived life...  
AGAIN.

But then I thought— I'm an adult now.

Enough with this "I'm not good enough" nonsense.

The company I work for fights for innocence.

We fight for the right to be innocent, to stay innocent. We fight to keep the lines and standards that make us a civilized nation.

Innocence is not to be scorned. The world is dark, and it's no one's job to be informed on every kind of darkness in order to be deemed an adult.

Some knowledge is not meant to be gained. And yet hasn't that always been our problem (Genesis 1)? Humans are on the hunt for the forbidden knowledge, ultimately stripping us of what little innocence we had.

# 10. Reflections on Twenty-Two

9.23.20

## *Contents:*

01. AGING GRACEFULLY

02. THERE'S A DIFFERENCE

### 01. AGING GRACEFULLY

I feel as if it's been 10 years since I moved from my cozy little Carolina home. Over six months have passed, and with each click of the clock, I've gained even more responsibilities.

Every other day I feel I have a deep philosophical talk with myself about how strange this season of life is. I come home, most days, feeling like I'm 26 or 31 like my coworkers, the people I spend eight hours of the day with for five days a week. But it's for good reasons!!

I've been given total creative license over a campaign for a mini documentary we'll be releasing, and this alone has made me feel like I'm much older than I actually am. (Someone rightfully asked me what a campaign is; basically, it's a massive charcuterie board of graphic design pieces that all must come together for a project. There are ads, thumbnails, motion graphics, website graphics, email graphics, coming soon announcements, social media banners, and I've been told more will be added at the last minute).

When I come home for the evening, I have to remind myself that I'm only 22 (whoops, almost said 21). I can still have an evening of just reading a book by a pool, going to the park, or whatever I fancy.

It helps that I'm an old soul at heart. ;)



### 02. THERE'S A DIFFERENCE

Turning 22 is very different from turning 16 or even 21.

By 22, you're most likely out of college and in ownership of a career and probably some plants. It seems like the advent of not caring about what age you're turning anymore. Twenty-two brings no added benefits; it's just the fact that you aren't turning 21 or 15 or 17.

For the first time in my life, I am "looking forward" to nothing: not high school, not college, not graduation. It's so relieving. It's all a beach, extending for eternity. There might be some piers along the way, and definitely some sudden storms, and maybe a few lighthouses and unclimbable rocks. But I'll keep climbing and walking and scurrying (but probably not swimming, I don't like sand getting everywhere).

The best thing about being 22 is that, as far as I know (and besides our interns), I'm the third youngest person at PragerU. And that's a label I'll carry proudly . . . for probably just the next two months at the rate we're hiring.

Birthdays are like a new year. They mark new opportunity, a better tomorrow. And that's exactly what I will see it as from now on.

*It's all a  
beach,  
extending for  
eternity...*





## *11. I Made a Mistake* 8.19.21

### *Contents:*

01. ON FAILING

02. THIS IS RADICAL

### 01. ON FAILING

We all fail sometimes, but I still always take it so hard. Maybe it's because at work, I'm treated like a full-grown adult, so in my mind I feel like I should "understand it all." So when I make the wrong choice, or forget to do devotions, or make other questionable decisions, it's very hard to accept.

One night, I could hardly focus on my devotions because I felt so guilty. I wrote this poem to explain what I was feeling. Can you relate?

*It was like something was unlocked in me  
last summer. Cooking became an escape  
from a world gone mad.*

i thought i was different from them;  
all along, just figured i was the wrong caliber.  
but i was naive.  
in the hands of the right marksman,  
in the barrel of the right gun,  
i'm the same round.

/

but give me time.  
i'm exploding in my youth--  
i've learned the blast hurts,  
the kickback isn't  
just for looks.  
i'll take a step back.  
i'll recalculate,  
readjust.

/

deep down,  
i know i don't need physics  
to help push me  
towards my target.

## O2. I'M EATING MUSHROOMS

I'm eating mushrooms.

I'm cooking new recipes on Sunday  
afternoons.

I'm cleaning THE OVERHANGS of my  
counters.

WHO. AM. I???

//

I went through a tomboy stage growing up,

and I remember it very clearly. I wore pants  
proudly and dismissed dresses and skirts; I  
dug holes in my backyard and tried to make  
a pool; I even climbed up a tree and just sat  
there proudly (it wasn't a very tall tree, but  
whatever it still counts). And then, although  
I eventually grew to love skirts and dresses  
and frilly things, I still disliked "homemaking  
things" like sewing and cooking, and  
cleaning?! Forget about it!

But it was like something was unlocked in  
me last summer. Cooking became an escape  
from a world gone mad. I could get lost  
in embroidery for hours, just making up  
patterns and focusing on pulling the string  
just tight enough that not a single thread  
would be loose.

And even beyond just bristling at the idea of  
general womanly things, I hated vegetables.  
But, ladies and gentlemen, I am proud to  
report that I now eat mushrooms, bok choy,  
and even cilantro.

These things happen to be radical. Every time  
I set out a skirt to wear the next morning,  
I smile a little bit, thinking about all the  
feminists that would reel at my decision.  
Every time I hear "a woman's place is in the  
kitchen!!" and I think "GLADLY!!!!" I feel  
a little bit brave, a little bit noble, a little bit  
VALIANT even.

Some of us are more quiet than others. We  
don't march into battle with the banners; we  
aren't at the front of the lines. But you still  
have a voice. And sometimes, it's just little  
things like opening up your apartment even  
though it's only a couple hundred square feet .  
. . or cleaning your counter overhangs.

*12. How  
Fried Chicken  
Thursday  
Got Started*

12.18.21



## *Contents:*

### 01. SO IT'S BEEN A YEAR

### 02. FRIED CHICKEN THURSDAY

## 01. SO IT'S BEEN A YEAR

It's been a year since I said goodbye to you dear friends.

A year since I made the craziest decision of my life thus far and moved to sunny California.

I feel as if this were all a giant test: I grew up in Greenville. I'd had 21 years to make a reputation for myself there. But I couldn't help but wonder: was I actually a good person? If I moved to a state where I knew no one, would I be able to make friends? Would I still gain the same reputation?

Okay, Amanda — I said. Here's the real test of your character. Maybe you've been a fraud this whole time. Maybe the California air will bring out the real you, someone you don't like and no one else will.

But, thank goodness—I am still the same person. There are rumors that I'm a more aggressive driver and a sassier speaker, but I can live with these (both are very advantageous to living in California).

So, PSA: Moving doesn't change you.

## 02. FRIED CHICKEN THURSDAY

If you ask anyone on my team, they'll say that Thursday is their favorite day of the week. And you know why?

Because!!! They'd say incredulously. It's FRIED. CHICKEN. THURSDAY!

Five select graphic designers cram into a car and drive to get delicious Al's Hot Chicken.

Now, you may say, isn't it madness to have Fried Chicken Thursday? Shouldn't it be Fried Chicken FRIDAY? The alliteration is so much better, after all.

Well, it once was Fried Chicken Friday. However, a team member long ago suggested moving the day from Friday to Thursday and the motion passed silently.

One time, we made the terrible error of trying Dave's Hot Chicken. Perched on the corner a mere thirty steps from Al's, this precocious chain decided to try and poach customers from Al's. I insisted we not cheat on Al — after all, he'd always treated us well. Sure, he took a while, and parking is absolutely abominable, but changing one major part of Fried Chicken Thursday could've changed the entire routine for good. If we weren't careful, we'd just stop getting fried chicken altogether and switch to something like smoothie bowls. Imagine the thought!

But I was overruled because, after all, I'm only a child. What do I know of loyalty? Or fried chicken?

But the guys got what was coming to them. Dave's was of unspeakable quality. Listen — they don't even butter their sandwich buns! The gall. Their chicken strips were a lot smaller, too, and don't get me started on the fries.

No. Seasoning.

We vowed from that day forward to never again partake of Dave's.

And we've been loyal to Al ever since.



## 13. *I'm Publishing a Book* I.30.22

### *Contents:*

01. HOW BEING A WRITER HELPS ME AS  
A GRAPHIC DESIGNER

02. SO...I'M BEING PUBLISHED

01. HOW BEING A WRITER HELPS  
ME AS A GRAPHIC DESIGNER

That first line—

That engaging, poetic first line is my anchor  
point.

All I need to begin writing is an engaging first  
line. I know and you know that the line will

probably be changed one day, but for now . . .  
it anchors my story.

Letters and words are my shapes. I toss  
them across the empty Word document, my  
artboard for the time being. This one isn't  
right, this one could be stronger, these two  
say the same thing . . . my fingers add, delete,  
merge, and change just a slight beat behind  
the racing of my brain.

Rewrite. Resize.

Save. (Don't forget that part!)

Someone once said that a first draft exists  
so you have something to edit in your first  
draft. This is true for both writing and graphic  
design. In writing, you need words. In design,

you need objects and text.

Every great thing started out as nothingness. Now, my dear friend, you have a preliminary masterpiece.

I keep editing: does this sound right? Does this look right? Is the right feeling being evoked?

This is the synthesis of my two crafts: they truly sing together. Writing taught me to not fear harsh critique; design taught me the importance of visuals in carrying a story. Both require discipline and curiosity.

I close out of the document. Tomorrow, another blank page will be awaiting me. And, just like before, I will find that anchor point deep within that keeps me coming back to these two loves of mine.

## O2. SO...I'M BEING PUBLISHED

Yes, you read that right! If you're following me on Instagram, you probably already know this super fun fact. I wrote a novel in 2017

and have been editing and submitting to publishers since then. One of the publishers that I submitted my story to last year ended up writing me back and, long story short, I will be publishing my 70,000-word long story by the end of the year (Lord-willing). Its current title is "The Memory Jumper," and it's a Young Adult psychological novel. You can find out more by visiting my author website ([www.amandamichellebrown.com](http://www.amandamichellebrown.com)).

For now, if you need me, I'll be curled up on my sofa or in a coffee shop trying to fix big-picture edits by the end of February. From my understanding, we'll then go through two more rounds of edits (one of them just being basic proofreading) before we start on back matter, blurb, and cover design.

This has been my biggest dream since I was a little girl. It often doesn't feel real, and it's pretty nerve-wracking too when I realize people are going to be judging my book's characters, conflict, and world. But that's just pushing me to investigate every word and character to make sure that it's the best it can be.



## 14. *Announcing My Book's Release Day* 4.3.21

### *Contents:*

- 01. ANNOUNCING MY BOOK'S  
RELEASE DAY
- 02. CHOOSING GRATITUDE

### 01. ANNOUNCING MY BOOK'S RELEASE DAY

So, yes!! My book will be releasing on October 8, 2022. On my side of things, I have about five days before I need to turn in my final round of big edits. Then we head into proofreading. Writing is easy: editing is an absolute nightmare haha (but that's when all the good stuff happens!). You can learn more about my book and get an insight into what the judges thought of my book by watching this YouTube video my publisher and I put together.

### 02. CHOOSING GRATITUDE

It's so easy to not be grateful, both in good times and bad. In the good times, you're just

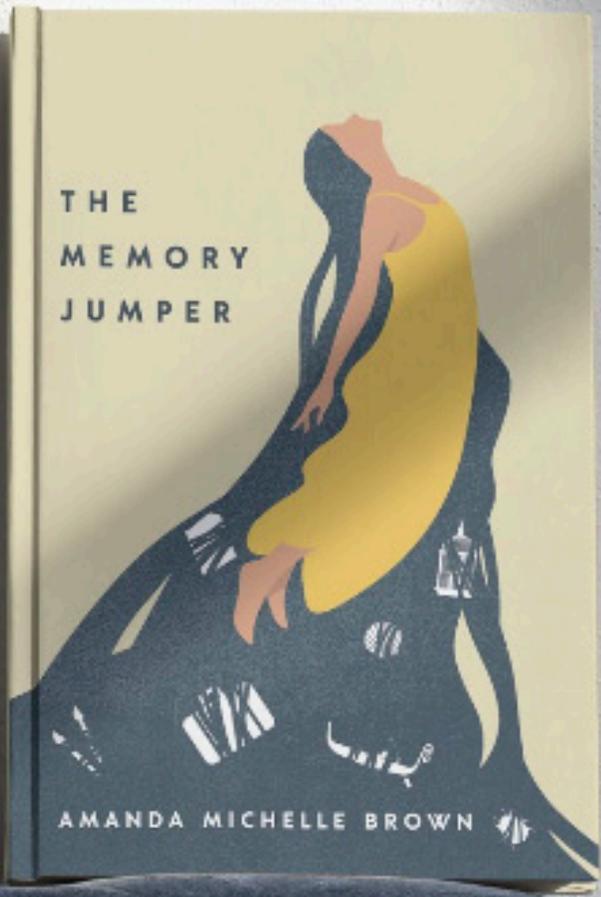
so focused on the happy and beautiful. It feels like this should be the normal state of life. And during bad times, of course being content is the LAST thing we're thinking about. We're just trying to get back to the good times.

I've been keenly aware of my need to be grateful in the past couple weeks. So, today I listened to a quick sermon on the topic by R. C. Sproul. He said to list out the ten things you want most in life, things you feel would make your life \*perfect\*. Then, look at those things and ask yourself if you could come to God Almighty with that list and unabashedly show Him. Would He agree that they're great things to pursue?

All in all, we are so very lucky and should be most grateful of all people. I mean, I'm publishing a book for goodness' sake!! But as soon as we get one thing we want—perhaps the thing we thought we most wanted in life—we become aware of how easily we could lose it, or how quickly it loses its shine.

Let's declare this a week of gratitude. Let's flood heaven with prayers of thanksgiving, no matter how much or how little we have.

THE  
MEMORY  
JUMPER



AMANDA MICHELLE BROWN



## 15. *All Hail the Muffin Queen* 5.26.21

### *Contents:*

- O1. CONTENTS OF MY DESK DRAWER
- O2. BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS
- O3. MY MUFFIN COMMITMENT

### O1. CONTENTS OF MY DESK DRAWER

You can tell a lot about someone based on the contents of their desk drawer at work. Hit REPLY and let me know what's in your drawer!! Here's mine:

- 1. Three dark chocolate truffles (for emergencies)
- 2. A pack of pastel Crayola markers, five bright highlighters (for color coding, and also just to look artsy in general)
- 3. Mushrooms I drew (used to be taped to my computer, but got removed during one of our many office moves).
- 4. A map of our office (never used)

## 02. BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

It's very hard to find good books to read nowadays, especially fiction. But I'm here with all the recommendations!! I want to become a reader again, and I am absolutely committed to this.

RECENTLY READ: *The Cartographers* by Peng Shepherd — I learned so much about maps, and I love a book that is informing yet entertaining. This is a thriller/mystery novel, so you're sure to be entertained! Check out my full review [here](#).

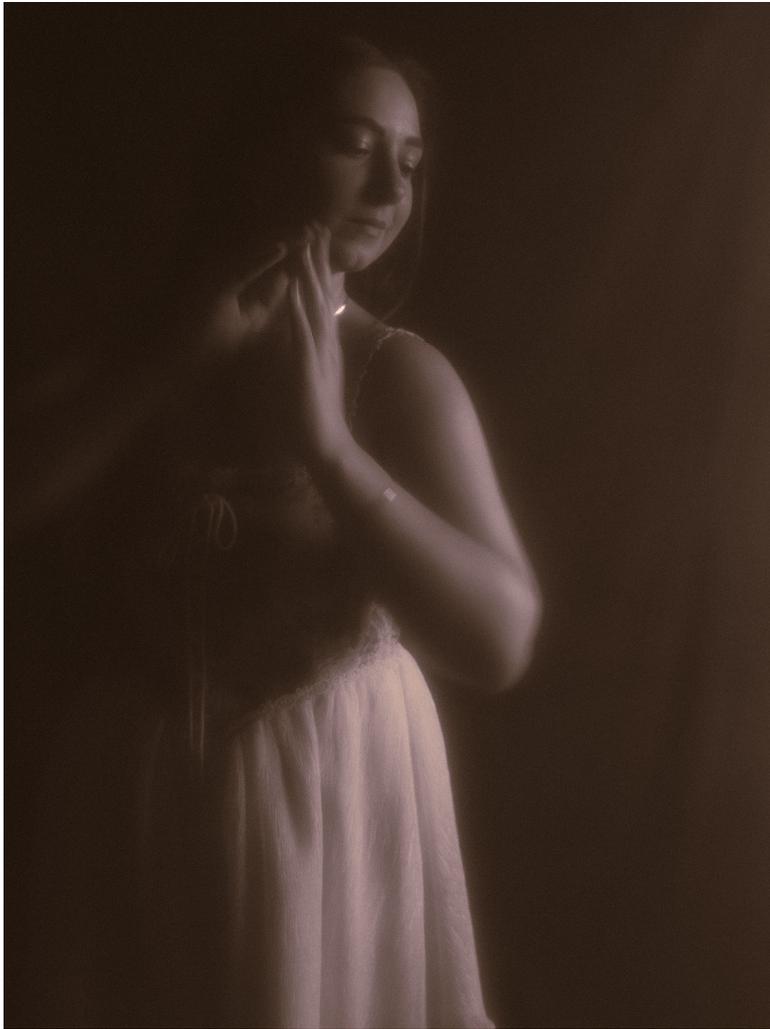
RECENTLY READ: *A History of Wild Places* by Shea Earnshaw — This book was GORGEOUS. Honestly, it gave me hope for literature. I feel like books are losing their artistry. The descriptions are lackluster: characters are just combinations of eye color and hair color, and all the clouds are "like cotton balls." Where is the CREATIVITY?! Anyway, this book gave me a lot of hope for the future. This is also a thriller (notice a theme?!) and tbh, I liked this better than *The Cartographers*. But who's judging??

CURRENTLY READING: *Desiring God* by John Piper. VERY HEADY, but very fascinating. It's all about being a Christian hedonist (basically, learning to find full satisfaction and joy and pleasure in God, and how searching for that isn't wrong).

## 03. A MUFFIN COMMITMENT

I feel this is very important to share with you all: after like a year of baking banana bread, I feel like my reign as banana bread queen is over and I'm moving on to other baked goods. I made muffins a couple months ago and they were okay...and then I made them a couple days ago and, again, they were just okay.

I love a good challenge, so I'm on the hunt for the best muffin recipe and consistency. If you have a recipe, hit [REPLY](#) and let me know! I will not give up until I am also the muffin queen.



## *16. A Tinge of Homesickness*

7.18.22

Lately, I've been missing my family a lot. Maybe it's because I just read "Where the Crawdads" sing, which is set in rural North Carolina and does an amazing job of capturing southern vibes. It makes me miss the friendliness of the south; it's like a warm hug, enshrouded in the sound of cicadas and the heaviness of humidity.

Sometimes I wish I could go back and have just one more day with my siblings; one more day of hurrying to finish school so we can go outside and try to play badminton or dig holes. One more day of taking out every toy we own and then having to clean up the absolute MESS we created.

When you're a kid, you never realize it'll end at some point. Childhood seems like a forever state; you don't worry about yesterday or tomorrow: all that matters is now.

I still remember our Star Wars marathons. I still remember standing up to bullies at the playground picking on my brother Zack. I still remember daily 10 o'clock snack time, back in the days when I could eat a pop tart every day without a second thought.

But we never get to the past by ruminating on it. Instead, we must carry the lessons we learned and savor the sweet flavor of innocent childish joy, understanding that we are where we are now for a reason. Whatever stage we're in, whatever stage we've left behind, they're all gifts. Gifts that keep on giving, though they may slowly be forgotten as we create new and better moments.



*Childhood*

*seems*

*like*

*a*

*forever*

*state*



# 17. *Miracles*

9.7.22

*Contents:*

01. TIME CHANGES US ALL

02. IT'LL TAKE TWO

MIRACLES

03. A MONTH OUT FROM

TMJ RELEASE



*Time is fluid,  
fragile, fleeting.*

## 01. TIME CHANGES US ALL

October 31 marks a year since I changed churches.

October itself marks a year since I began my publishing journey, when I submitted my novel to a contest not knowing what to expect.

December marks two years since I moved to California.

And through all this, all I can think is how much can change in two years. In one year. In six months.

Time is fluid, fragile, fleeting. If your now is too difficult, hold tight to the hope that: things will change. And if your now is beautiful, also remember that it may not be forever so you must cherish every moment.

## 02. IT'LL TAKE TWO MIRACLES

Are you ever overwhelmed by the goodness of God? And how much you don't deserve it? This Labor Day weekend my boyfriend and I were driving home from watching *Top Gun: Maverick* (definitely recommend, by the way). In that movie, Tom Cruise says two miracles must happen in order for the mission to be successful. Well, this story I'm telling you is a story of two miracles that had to happen for our drive home to be safe/successful.

The battery light on my boyfriend's car came on, red and ominous. "Red ... that's bad, right?" I asked. We kept driving, hoping we could make it to my place.

We were one minute from my apartment, turning off of the highway, when his car shuddered. Then, warnings started coming on: brake failing, airbags failing, EVERYTHING literally was failing. We were able to get to my apartment before it died, literally just two yards from my parking spot.

That's Miracle One: that the car didn't die on the highway during the 30-minute drive.

I needed to get help to push his car into my parking spot, so I ran upstairs to the pool area. Amazingly, there was a man willing to help...and he was a car mechanic too! He jumped the car

and even diagnosed the car problem and gave us a good recommendation for getting it fixed.

That was Miracle Two: that of all the people in the pool area that evening, a car mechanic had been there.

I could barely sleep that night after everything happened because I was just so grateful that God had been watching out for us. So many things could've gone wrong. I'm always amazed when I remember God's goodness and how He is so good to me even when I don't deserve it (and when DO I?). I fail Him so many times, and I forget Him. I forget to seek His wisdom or make decisions based on His Word.

And yet He is good. Because that's who He is. We change, yet He never does. And thank GOODNESS for that.

## 03. A MONTH OUT FROM TMJ RELEASE

What does it feel like to be a month out from your book's release? Well, honestly, I'm kind of numb.

Work has been very intense and I have some other side projects going on and, honestly, I know it's all a little too much. Yet I keep going, because that's me.

I'm begging myself to enjoy this, because I may never have this anticipation of a book release again. I am in the twilight of bookdom, waiting for the sun to rise and cast its light on my baby. Everyone at work has been so insanely kind, congratulating me in the halls and getting me celebratory cookies and asking if I'll sign it when it releases (ummmmm of course!!). The attention is a lot, yet I feel so loved and surrounded by a great community.

So, publishing a book doesn't feel like I thought it would.

But, after my initial book coma (a six-month period where I stopped working out and playing ukulele and doing other side projects because I was steeped in preparing this novel), I'm slowly slipping back into normal life.

And when I see people holding my book in their hands, I feel like that'll make all the chaos worth it.



# 18. *The Art of Slow*

12.8.22

## 01. THE ART OF SLOW

I...have never liked slow. I am notoriously fast in all I do, which sometimes means I sacrifice quality for speed. But today, I want you to think about the person in your life who reminds you to take things slow (or maybe you're that person for someone else?).

For me, God plugged someone into my life earlier this year who has unwittingly caused me to embrace the SLOW.

I met a boy in April who, from our first date to even now, has slowed me down (in a very good way).

He was the first guy who ever took the time to stroll slowly with me through an art museum.

And this theme of slow has continued to even now. When I'm in the gym, I want to go hard and strong and just get the movement over with. But my patient boyfriend reminds me, "Hey—if you aren't THINKING about the movement and really letting it soak into your muscles, you aren't doing anything for yourself and we might as well stop."

Good things take time—we know this.

But in our fast-paced world, slow isn't a virtue anymore. I usually dart through the grocery store, but when I'm with Michael he stops to check out strange flavored drinks, fruit he's never tried before, a pudding that reminds him of his childhood, and a family-sized carton of guacamole.

We all need someone in our lives to remind us to take things slow, to enjoy the little things

in life. To tell us it's okay to stroll back to our apartment instead of speedwalking like there's a chicken burning in the oven (let's be real—there IS no chicken, there NEVER WAS a chicken, we just DON'T KNOW HOW TO STOP AND SMELL THE ROSES).

## O2. MEMORIES

My debut novel (The Memory Jumper) was all about the power of memories, so now I feel like I've branded myself as the memory girl.

We are mosaics of experiences and people. And SO. MUCH. HAS HAPPENED TO ME THIS YEAR!!

But for now, since you're my captive audience, here's my lists of . . .

### BIG THINGS

1. Published my debut novel
2. Said goodbye to my BEST FRIEND \*tears\*
3. Joined my new church
4. Ate A LOT of empanadas
5. Pioneered brand projects at work
6. Mom & Rachel came to visit for the first time!
7. Made coffee cake, banana bread, my first ever frosted cake, then a really UGLY frosted cake, gingerbread cookies, and muffins
8. Visited Sea World and Universal Studios
9. 1 baby shower, 1 engagement party, 1 wedding, 1 housewarming party, 2 wedding showers (lots to celebrate!!)

### FIRSTS

1. Watched Lord of the Rings (with LotR nerdy fans)

2. Got a popped tire (yay fun NO BOOOOOO)
3. Tried octopus/scallops/oysters/bone marrow
4. Zested my thumb (whoops)
5. Rode a motorcycle
6. DROVE a motorcycle (for like 2 seconds then fell off)
7. Axe throwing
8. Church retreat for young adults
9. Fashion show
10. Made a balloon garland
11. Bought my own TV (hullo Great British Baking Show)

# thank YOU

Thank you so much for all of your prayer, kind words, and support. I feel every prayer and cherish them.

Website: [Amandamichellebrown.com](http://Amandamichellebrown.com)

Blog: [www.ohbelovedone.com](http://www.ohbelovedone.com)

Book: "The Memory Jumper" (available online with Amazon and Barnes & Noble)

*Amanda Michelle Brown*

**About the cover:** From a self-portrait shoot I did entitled "The Young Professional," this series is meant to encapsulate the feeling one has when entering their career path. They're suddenly supposed to know what they're doing, but most of us are just still bumbling kids-at-heart trying to figure out how to connect a printer to a computer (harder than it sounds!!). We barely know which shoes to wear most days. But we'll get there one day!