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A Moment in Ecuador

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Postcard from Quito, Ecuador

Spring Semester 2011 This Moment in Ecuador

The ache that I feel knowing that this moment is passing. The surreality of my life here, laying in this bed, studying the painting that my host-mother has painted. I look around my room, the picture of my host-sister and her boyfriend smiling at me, my closet emptier than I'm used to, the mounds of books I thought I would be reading. And I look at myself, my body sprawled and exhausted from my Modern Dance class, my hair fried from days in the Ecuadorian sun. My phone buzzes and I look to find a text from my *amigovio* (friend+boyfriend in Spanish)...how do I respond to this message? He wants to go out tonight, a Monday, at 9 pm, and I have a test tomorrow. Plus, I don't quite know the protocol that my family wants in terms of going-out notice. As I think about what I want, I sniffle and my head pounds. Too many nights of going out with friends, exploring the city and surrounding areas, and learning how to salsa. I need rest.

My life here is unexplainable. A whirlwind of buses, long Spanish conversations, alone time, too much time with people, decisions about what to do, spur of the moment activities, traveling, breath taking beauty. I need it all to slow down. I continue to tell myself to take it one moment at a time, to soak it all up, but I feel that I as a sponge am leaving some liquid behind. How can I take in all of the adventure. From Mindo's cloud forests, to Banos' bridge jumping, to the indigenous market in Otobalao, to the time I was stranded at the Ecuador-Peru border. To the incredible warmth and security that my family has shown me. I am sure that I will not be able to take it all in. I am overwhelmed--knowing that I love every moment of this experience, knowing that I am blessed to be a part of this rich culture. I want every moment to continue forever so that I can walk along the cobble stones of Guapulo and examine every aspect of the graffiti on the ancient walls. I want time to pause when my bus stops just long enough for me watch a man walk on a tight-rope from two light poles in downtown Quito. So that I can understand what I'm seeing. So that I can laugh a little. So that I can truly appreciate the situation. I wish that the smell of bread from the bakery down my street, Mañosca, would always be just a few blocks away.

And then I think about a moment in which time did freeze. As my friends and I were driving away from Papallacta, a hot-springs resort outside of Quito, we stopped to look at the stars. In Quito it is utterly impossible to see a star because of the smog, but here they clutter my vision and throb as one giant, glittery amoeba. Surrounded by the Ecuadorian *paramo* I took a deep breath and looked skyward. At that moment I felt incredibly small, and accepted my life as certainly insignificant. I closed my eyes and thanked a higher power for this moment, and every moment after. And laying here in my bed, knowing that this moment is passing, it's okay because life will pass but I am here. Right now. In Ecuador. Living a reality that I could not have imagined. And so with this acceptance I pick up my phone and respond to my *amigovio*, "see you in 10 minutes!".

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