

Olive Olson
My Room in Topeka, Kansas

I've only really lived here for two weeks. Almost three I guess, especially if you count the few nights I spent here in December. But then it always felt more like an Airbnb.

In the short time that I've been here I have made this room my own in every way. The door is in the Southeast corner of the room, with a crystal-like glass doorknob. To the right of the door is a light switch that I rarely touch because the light that it turns on makes the room look like a 60s crime scene. Next to the light switch the wall sticks out about 8 inches for no apparent reason. The protrusion is as tall as the door, and about two feet wide. It looks like maybe there was once a door there, but that doesn't really make sense. Next to that is a built-in wardrobe. This is one of my favorite parts of this small room. The wardrobe is huge, well, compared to the room. In reality it is a pretty average sized wardrobe. It doesn't go all the way to the floor, it stops about a foot from the ground so there is room for two large drawers underneath. When the whole setup is closed there are two big doors for the wardrobe and two equal sized drawers underneath. Right now, however, both of the underneath drawers are open. The drawer on the left holds my shoes, only two pairs right now though. There is another pair of shoes right next to the drawer, I guess I was too lazy to pick them up and actually put them in the drawer... oh well. The drawer on the right holds my socks, although I could never have enough socks to fill the entire drawer.

In front of my wardrobe, along with the one pair of shoes I also have an alarming amount of trash. All from snacks because I eat in bed (gross I know). There are also a couple pairs of dirty socks because sometimes when I get back from a walk and hop into bed my feet are too hot, I guess. There is also a laundry basket full of clean folded laundry that I have yet to put away from a couple of days ago.

Adjacent to the wardrobe wall is a window. On the windowsill is a picture of some bed that I don't recognize, a small plant that is surviving by some miracle, and a frame with two pictures of some of my closest friends from high school. The window is cracked open in case my cats want to come in and smell the air, my mom says they like that.

Beneath the window is a little bedside table with all kinds of nonsense: a rack of essential oils that give me a headache, a candle that is clearly used but never by me, a box of tissues, a little glass bowl of hotel lotions and my favorite chapsticks (past and present), a half full water bottle, a little plush that my friend bought me from Safeway, a nail file, an empty Ziplock bag that once contained cookies, earrings, my favorite lighter, and a watch that keeps me up every night yet I for some reason refuse to move.

This bedside table is, as you may have guessed, next to my bed, a double if you'd like dimensions. My bed is unmade, always, with two pillows sort of catawampus at the head. There is a pink comforter balled up in the middle of the bed, and a deep pink fuzzy blanket hanging off the bottom edge. There was once a sheet as well I believe, but I am a very harsh sleeper so that was gone in an instant. My sheets were washed two days ago, but my bed is still full of a smorgasbord of litter, crumbs, cat hair, and other random crap that gets stuck to my socks.

Next to the window on the wall is a piece of art that my sister made in high school. It has twelve embroidered squares with pen drawings of flowers in each square. Each flower is also faintly painted with watercolor.

Commented [001]: I indented my paragraphs throughout this piece because that is how I was always taught to format my writing, and I didn't know there were other options. I have since switched to a style of block writing where my paragraphs are not indented but have a space between them. I find it more visually appealing and often more effective.

Commented [002]: I wrote this to give the reader an idea of the lighting in my room. I am a big fan of true crime, so the "60s crime scene" is what first comes to mind when I see a specific lighting

Commented [003]: This sentence gives a look into my thoughts towards my room layout and into my thought process as I look around. I propose a potential reasoning for the protrusion, but also doubt myself.

Commented [004]: This provides a look into my lifestyle and how I view myself and my choices. "Oh well" I don't really care that my shoes are out of place, but I recognize how ridiculous it is to have them so close to the place they actually belong.

Commented [005]: This whole paragraph shows how messy of a person I am, and also how I feel about that. I seem to not have much insight on why I do the things I do, but I am willing to justify my actions somewhat. This makes me a more relatable and reliable narrator. Taking responsibility for my dirty socks but also letting the reader know why they are there.

Commented [006]: This shows my relationship with my mother a bit as I trust what she says and will leave my window open for my cats, no matter how strange that may be. A bit of a "I am my mother's daughter" situation

Commented [007]: This paragraph contains many statements about how I don't fully like the things on the table, yet I keep them there. In retrospect I was noting how even when things are harming me I tend to let them stay.

Commented [008]: I intended for this sentence to add a bit of humor to this piece. I was hoping to directly engage with the reader with this sentence and lighten up the piece a little.

Commented [009]: Another comment about my cleanliness. This clarifies that I am not fully apathetic to the cleanliness of my space, but some dirt is unavoidable and I accept that.

In the corner hangs a lantern type light from Ikea. It used to hang in my old room, but I decided I didn't like it. It looks so much better here. This is really the only light that I use in my room.

On the adjacent wall to my sister's artwork there is a large framed poster for some event 9 years ago. The poster has a digitally drawn woman lying in some flowers. The whole poster is different shades of pink. When I moved in my mom said, "If you don't like the poster you can absolutely take it down and replace it, I just thought it matched the blankets nicely". The poster used to hang in the hallway of my Lawrence home and I never looked twice at it, but she's right, it does match my new blankets and I would never even think about moving it. A few feet away from the poster is another window. This window is closed because I don't want to encourage my cats to ever get on my desk which is under the window. On that windowsill there are six empty cans of AHA water, the black cherry and coffee flavor. To some this may seem tacky, which it probably actually is, but I think the cans sort of match the pink theme in my room, so I keep them. On the windowsill there is also a Christmas card from my dad that says "I'm dreaming of a white Christmas and a portal to the feminist utopia", and a framed print from one of my best friends that says "I want to the whole world or nothing". On the string of the blinds to the window I have attached a magnet of a mama giraffe kissing a baby giraffe's head that looks like it is about a million years old and I have had it in my room for as long as I can remember. I decided that will be my next tattoo so I can keep it with me even if I lose the magnet.

As I mentioned, beneath the window is my desk which, similar to my bedside table, is a mess of nonsense. More or less from left to right, the top of my desk holds as follows: A photo of me and my best friend in a sparkly pink frame, A billion makeup brushes, a mug with a sip of iced tea left, a bottle of nail polish remover, a kindle, a hat that I accidentally stole from my roommate's sister, a single dollar bill folded up, a coaster, earrings, little cat stickers, a business card for a potentially valuable connection that I am dragging my feet about contacting, a little mirror that distracts me in zoom classes, a hair straightener, my favorite chapstick, a pepper shaker I got from my old diner that looks like a dog in a beach outfit wearing sunglasses, a lamp (untouched), a mug with a little paw on it that is full of pens and pencils, an eye pencil sharpener, a spindle that I made at woodshop on a first date (it looks like complete garbage but he told me it was cute so I kept it), and a little grater that came with a block of salt that my roommate threw away after my friend got drunk and wouldn't stop putting it in her mouth. All of those things are in a sort of semicircle around the spot that I usually put in my computer and notebook during zoom classes. The desk has a door on the left that opens to some shelves and is almost always open.

The chair at my desk is an old sandy colored roly chair with a red robe and a pink corduroy jacket draped on the back.

My desk faces the window and is just a few inches from a corner. In that corner is my "recycling pile" ... looks like trash. On the wall adjacent to the window there is a sort of small cork board that I have packed with mementoes that used to cover my wall in my dorm. A couple feet away from the corkboard is a round mirror that hangs above my small dresser. I used the dresser when I was a kid, but I quickly gained more clothes than would fit in it and got a new one. But now this little dresser holds the small amount of clothes I brought back from Denver perfectly. It is a little shorter than my waist and just a couple feet wide. On top of my dresser I have 5 bottles of vitamins/pills, my moisturizer and hair product, three bandanas, a pack of gum, a hairbrush, three small packs of tissues, deodorant, and an ancient box that once held ashes collected from the summit of Pike's Peak.

Commented [OO10]: This is another note about my mother's impact in my life. I wanted my reader to understand how much my mother tried to make my room a comfortable space for me, and that meant a lot to me.

Commented [OO11]: With this sentence I was hoping to make the reader understand my alignment with my mother's theme for the room, and recognize that my idea of organized and themed is not necessarily fancy.

Commented [OO12]: I've gotten about 8 other tattoos since I wrote this and none have been the giraffe, in retrospect it was more about the meaning than the permanence.

Commented [OO13]: I wanted the reader to understand that my hesitation is more rooted in the fear of failure rather than procrastination, but I'm not sure if that came across how I wanted it to.

Commented [OO14]: This cork board was a little piece of my dorm room that I created when I had to leave so abruptly, but I could have described it better to make it clear this represented my dorm room and what I left behind.

To the left of the dresser is my backpack, two plastic bags, and a shirt that I keep saying I will turn into a tube top but can't seem to get around to. On the right there is a small pile of laundry because I don't really have a hamper.

In the middle of my room, which is really a very small amount of space, there is another pair of shoes (keep in mind the middle of my room is only a couple of feet from my shoe drawer...), some more dirty clothes, and a couple of items I have yet to find a place for since I've moved in.

For some reason sound in my room can barely be heard throughout the rest of the apartment, but I can hear sounds from other rooms fairly clearly. My mom works for the Kansas Department Of Health and Environment, so part of her job right now involves answering a Covid-19 Hotline for the state, so right now I am listening to her tell someone how they can get tested in their county and how she hopes that it's negative! ... from what I could hear it sounds like it might be positive. I can often hear kids playing in the courtyard outside my bedside window. I also often hear my mom talking to the cats (that runs in the family).

My room currently smells strongly of Orange. When my mom got this place, she put air fresheners in which I had never known her to do before. I had no complaints, but I was a little surprised. Just yesterday we got new scents in the mail and I got to choose the one for my room and she chose the one for the living room. She was so excited. Strong smells usually give my headaches, but I love this orange one. I also love the one she put in the living room. Honestly, I think I would love any scent she got. Maybe it's about how excited she was.

When I first stayed the night here, I wrote about it. I wrote about how it felt to call this "my room". I wrote about how I had lived in the same room my whole life until going to college, and now I have a new one. I wrote about how my other room is 31 minutes away. 34 if you avoid tolls. My mom wanted me to feel welcome and comfortable here more than anything.

Last week my dad said that I could come back to Lawrence now if I wanted because I had been "quarantined" for two weeks. Of course, I want to see him and to live in my old room in the same town as all my friends. But right now, this is my room, and I *am* comfortable here, and I think I am going to stay, at least for now.

Commented [OO15]: Yet another "I am my mothers daughter" statement, but I would like to have clarified it better, maybe saying "I also often hear my mom talking to the cats (I wonder if she hears me talk to them too" or something along those lines.

Commented [OO16]: I didn't explain very well throughout this piece that this new place is due to my parents separation when I left for college. This is a statement where I am acknowledging and loving how much love my mother has for her new space and sort of her new self. In retrospect I wish this were more clear throughout the piece rather than just in this statement.

Commented [OO17]: Here is some of the explanation I was looking for, I think it has just the meaning I want where it is, but I want to think about how I could add in more throughout rather than keeping the piece more anonymous. The reader connects when they understand.