

It just isn't Home

Written and
illustrated by
Henriette M Lillegaard



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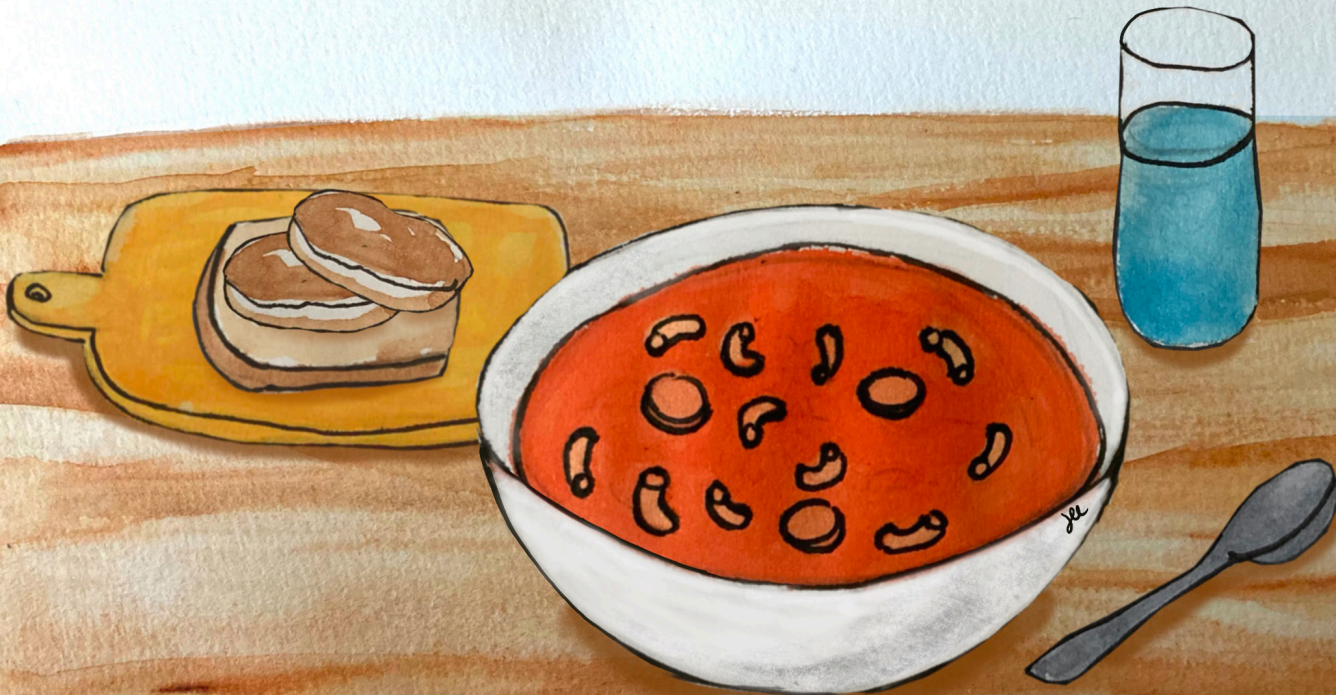
I studied abroad in UK for 4 years from 2017 to 2021. When I was abroad, I was experiencing quite a bit of homesickness. It was my first time living alone without my parents and I was in a country I had visited only a few times before. The only person I knew that lived somewhat close was my partner which lived an hour or so away. I did know the language but still had to ask on occasion what some things meant. Being from a place not too far away you would think there would not be that many differences but there is plenty.

My Home town ->



These differences made me miss things I did not think I would miss. Here is some of it:

- Good air
- The ocean
- Good water
- Norwegian tomato soup and fish cakes which surprised me
- Good bread
- Norwegian food in general
- Scandinavian snacks and sweets
- Scandinavian beauty products
- Hills
- Safer roads
- Comfort of language
- Comfort of country, culture, and customs



But what I missed the most was

Family



I made sure to always go home for summer. Both of my parents would always come pick me up at the airport even though its not too far away from home.

Summer has always been a good time to be with the family, we always went swimming, on boat trips, visit islands and beaches around my town, visit grandma, have a BBQ birthday party for my dad, read in the garden, set up and use the hammock, eat ice cream, have a picnic, go on a bikeride, get sunburnt, go shopping, sometimes visit the zoo, eat at a restaurant, visit the graves, and visit the pebble beach. Usually more than once.



When going back to UK I always brought with me some Norwegian or Scandinavian items. This included:

- Snacks
- Sweets, like chocolate and salty licorice
- Seasonings, like grill spice mix and herby salt
- Cocoa, just need to add boiling water
- Crisp bread, crispy bread commonly made with rye
- My favourite Shampoo



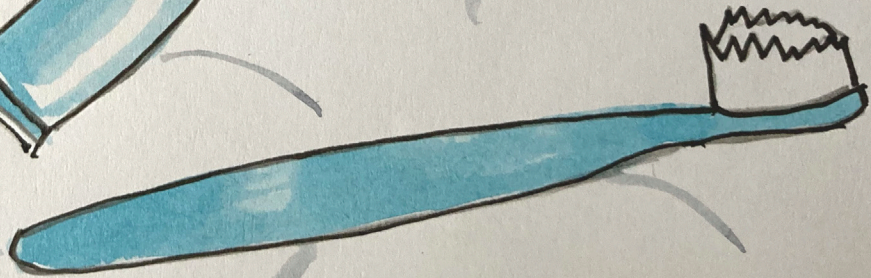
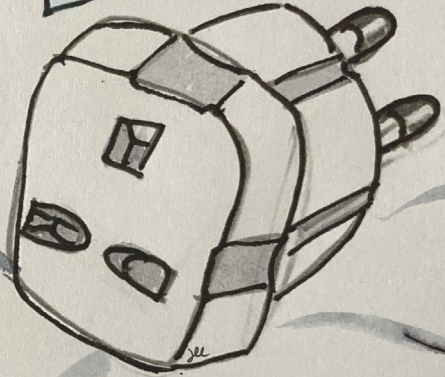
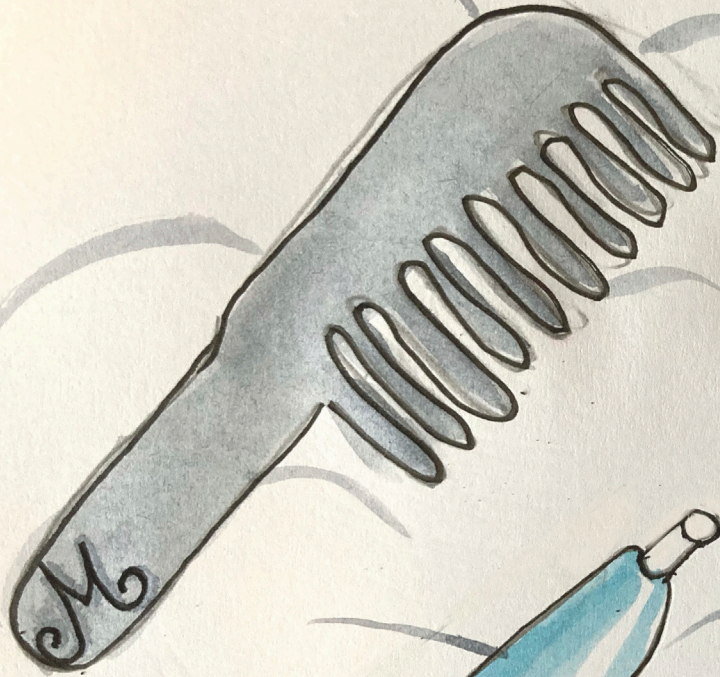
When I was abroad, I called with my mom weekly, every Friday. Usually while we call, I cook dinner. Every Friday I make spaghetti because it is my favourite meal. And I grew up with spaghetti Fridays. Which is been a thing since my older siblings were small. Although it is not a thing my parents have been continuing with once I moved out as I am the youngest, but when I am visiting, I insist on spaghetti Fridays.

One Friday my mom asked to call earlier so we could call with computer using webcam. Later when cooking I felt sad as I was not calling with her while cooking. After that I downloaded the app on my phone, and we called while I was cooking again. So, we could continue with our made tradition.



When traveling I often had to take two planes. One to Oslo, the capital of Norway and one to a town closer to my parents where they would pick me up. But sometimes I would travel through Amsterdam instead.

One of those times I had felt quite homesick for a few weeks and on my way home for Christmas there was some delays. But when I finally arrived in Amsterdam my next plane was cancelled. I got quite worried and made sure to listen to all instructions. I got directed to a bus and told that the suitcase is staying at the airport for easy travel the next day, so I was stuck with only my backpack. I arrived at a hotel, and this hotel was looking fancy. This made me rather annoyed as I was standing there in airport clothing, no toothbrush, little change of clothing and no adapter for my charger. I got a coupon for the hotel restaurant and I ordered. I called my mom and told her all about it. I was feeling quite frustrated and not being able to get any ketchup for my burger was not helping. I noticed my charge was running low and I talked with the lady at the check in, she said I could leave my phone to charge there overnight, but I did not want that. So I had to buy an expensive European adapter which I will never need again. But I also got a free toothbrush, toothpaste, and a comb. I went to my room, locked the door and I started crying, I was feeling very frustrated and homesick. I changed into a dirty hoodie and tried the toothpaste which tasted weird, tried combing through my hair and went to bed early. The next day I got put on an early bus and got given another coupon for food at the airport. After quite a few further delays the fog faded and I got on the plane. When I finally arrived, I was feeling quite relieved to be home with my parents.



Every Christmas or Jul, Norwegian Christmas, I travelled home. I brought with me gifts that I bought in UK. While there I bake and decorate gingerbread with my mom, pick up the tree with my dad, watch movies with my parents, go to the mall, open my lottery advent calendar which my mom sent me in the mail in advance so I could start 1st December, and celebrate on 24th with my parents, brother, and grandma and sometimes more. On Christmas eve I open my stocking in the morning, watch Christmas movies, and get ready for the guests in the afternoon, then we eat our Christmas dinner made by my parents and open gifts from under the tree in the evening. The next day my half-sister and her girlfriend and sometimes my half-brother or other guests arrive for a brunch.

My last Christmas abroad I decided on the 23rd in the evening to go to town and buy my mom, dad, and brother stuff for a stocking each. I usually ask my mom to make me a stocking, and sometimes she makes one for my brother as well, but this time I decided to make one for everyone. In the stockings there is usually snacks, sweets, and an item or two. I got my dad and brother a small pack of Lego each and I got my mom a massage roller for her feet. Among different sweets and snacks, I thought they might like. We only had my stocking left so I had to get some wool socks to put their stuff in, some stuff did not fit and had to be put aside. I should make stockings for them again.



I was sent birthday parcels. My first year abroad my brother even sent me items. I would call with my parents, open the parcels, have ordered myself a present and I would either make myself something nice for dinner or I would order in.
It was a rather lonely day.

Call ended



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I called with my grandma and thought of her pancakes and I asked for her recipe. I got it written down and I made them for me and my partner. They did not taste completely right, but almost.

After doing this I got an idea for a project, I told my mom and dad about it and then on the call with my grandma on her birthday I asked if she would want to make a cookbook with her recipes and my illustrations and photos, and she said she has been writing down her recipes already and she liked the idea.



My first Easter abroad I had not planned on going home, but then a few days before break I get a phone call and I hear that my grandpa had passed away. I talk with my parents and it is decided that I am coming home for Easter, for the funeral. I was not feeling too sad, but once I got to the funeral it hit me, I saw his saxophone next to his casket and I started crying. It did not feel real that he had passed until then. Next time we visited I placed a small plastic saxophone by his grave that I had bought.

The next year I planned with my parents for easter that they would come visit me and we would go to London for a few days, after that I joined them to Norway for the rest of the break.

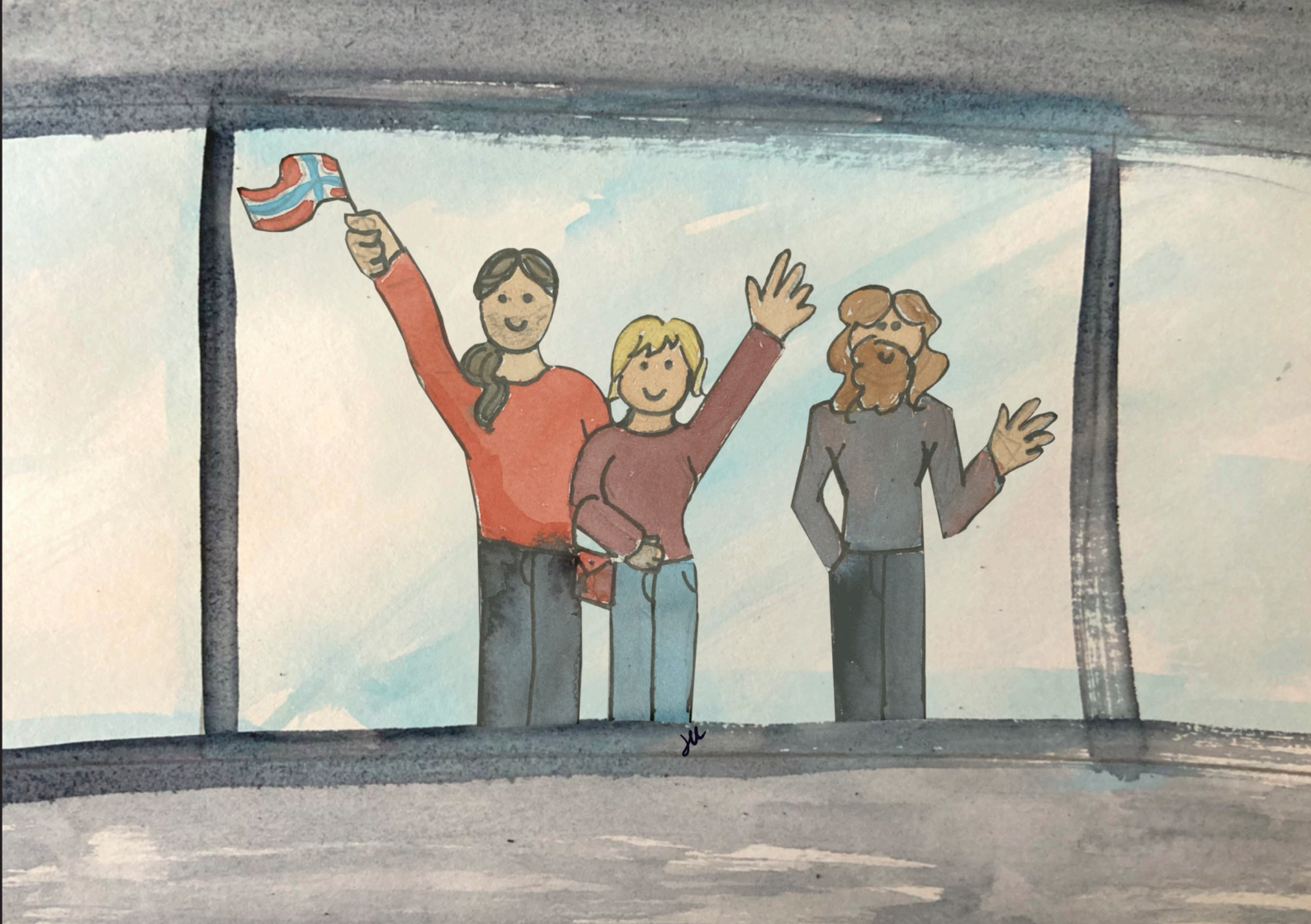
The third year was during the pandemic, I got a text saying the Norwegian government is recommending everyone abroad to come home. I tell my teacher, and then I get a text that my plane had been cancelled, I call with my mom and my plane trip got moved to the next day instead of in two days, I walk back and tell my teacher, then I get to my flat and a flatmate helps me pack. Once I arrive at the airport my ticket is not working, I talk with the people there and find out that I somehow have no ticket, I order one right there and I somehow manage to get home. And there I stayed for 6 months during the beginning of the pandemic.

The last Easter abroad I was not able to go home, the pandemic was still happening, and I would have been stuck in a quarantine hotel for most of it if I were to go. I called with my family and my mom sent me a parcel, but not being able to go made me rather homesick and sad.



While being abroad I truly started to appreciate my parents, and spending more time with them when visiting and enjoying it more than I would have when I was living there.

I decided to move back home to Norway once done with my 4th and last year of university. To move in with my parents again until further notice, while finding opportunities and applying for jobs. Which I was quite looking forward to especially as I quite enjoyed living with them for the 6 months of the beginning of the pandemic. But this time I would move back there with all my things and I would stop living in two countries at once. I would be fully home.



It just isn't Home
is a book written and illustrated
by Henriette M Lillegaard
Where she tells stories
from her experiences of
homesickness and
loneliness while she was
studying abroad in
the United Kingdom.

