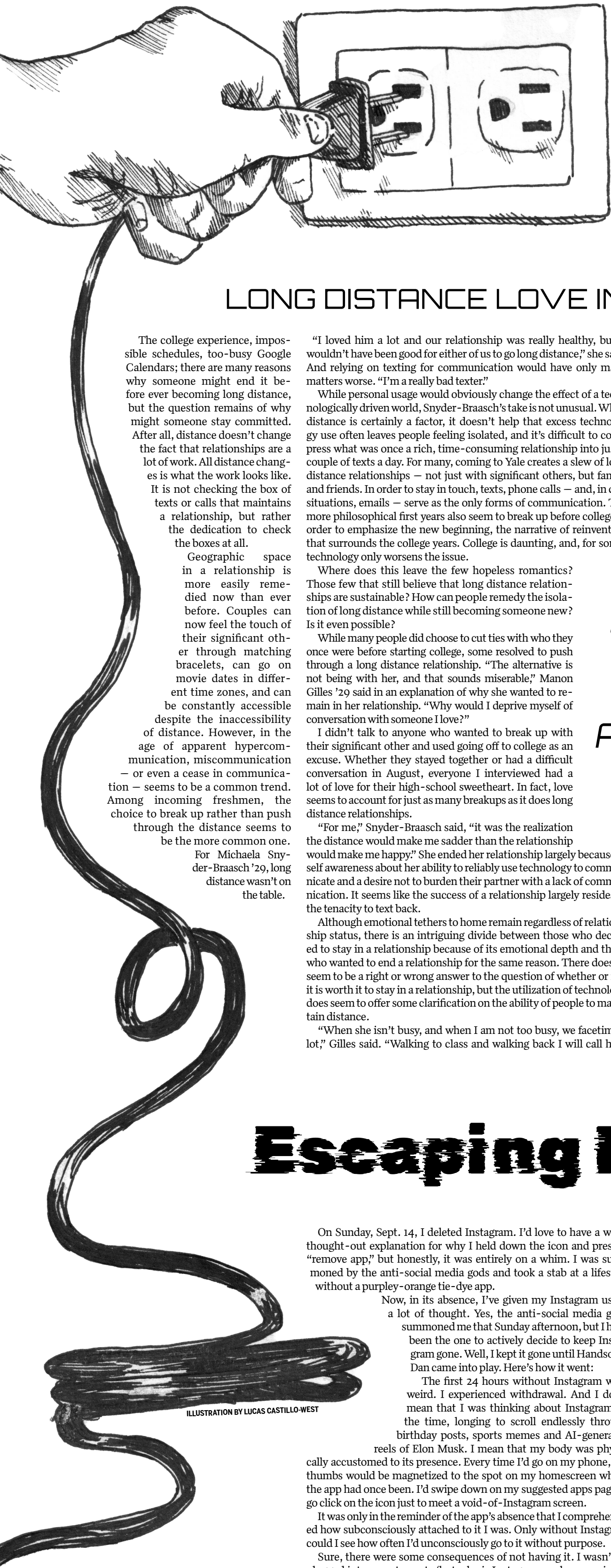




The college experience, impossible schedules, too-busy Google Calendars; there are many reasons why someone might end it before ever becoming long distance, but the question remains of why might someone stay committed. After all, distance doesn't change the fact that relationships are a lot of work. All distance changes is what the work looks like. It is not checking the box of texts or calls that maintains a relationship, but rather the dedication to check the boxes at all. Geographic space in a relationship is more easily remedied now than ever before. Couples can now feel the touch of their significant other through matching bracelets, can go on movie dates in different time zones, and can be constantly accessible despite the inaccessibility of distance. However, in the age of apparent hypercommunication, miscommunication — or even a cease in communication — seems to be a common trend. Among incoming freshmen, the choice to break up rather than push through the distance seems to be the more common one. For Michaela Snyder-Braasch '29, long distance wasn't on the table.

"I loved him a lot and our relationship was really healthy, but it wouldn't have been good for either of us to go long distance," she said. And relying on texting for communication would have only made matters worse. "I'm a really bad texter." While personal usage would obviously change the effect of a technologically driven world, Snyder-Braasch's take is not unusual. While distance is certainly a factor, it doesn't help that excess technology use often leaves people feeling isolated, and it's difficult to compress what was once a rich, time-consuming relationship into just a couple of texts a day. For many, coming to Yale creates a slew of long distance relationships — not just with significant others, but family and friends. In order to stay in touch, texts, phone calls — and, in dire situations, emails — serve as the only forms of communication. The more philosophical first years also seem to break up before college in order to emphasize the new beginning, the narrative of reinvention that surrounds the college years. College is daunting, and, for some, technology only worsens the issue. Where does this leave the few hopeless romantics? Those few that still believe that long distance relationships are sustainable? How can people remedy the isolation of long distance while still becoming someone new? Is it even possible? While many people did choose to cut ties with who they once were before starting college, some resolved to push through a long distance relationship. "The alternative is not being with her, and that sounds miserable," Manon Gilles '29 said in an explanation of why she wanted to remain in her relationship. "Why would I deprive myself of conversation with someone I love?" I didn't talk to anyone who wanted to break up with their significant other and used going off to college as an excuse. Whether they stayed together or had a difficult conversation in August, everyone I interviewed had a lot of love for their high-school sweetheart. In fact, love seems to account for just as many breakups as it does long distance relationships. "For me," Snyder-Braasch said, "it was the realization the distance would make me sadder than the relationship would make me happy." She ended her relationship largely because of self awareness about her ability to reliably use technology to communicate and a desire not to burden their partner with a lack of communication. It seems like the success of a relationship largely resides in the tenacity to text back. Although emotional tethers to home remain regardless of relationship status, there is an intriguing divide between those who decided to stay in a relationship because of its emotional depth and those who wanted to end a relationship for the same reason. There doesn't seem to be a right or wrong answer to the question of whether or not it is worth it to stay in a relationship, but the utilization of technology does seem to offer some clarification on the ability of people to maintain distance. "When she isn't busy, and when I am not too busy, we facetime a lot," Gilles said. "Walking to class and walking back I will call her:"

CULTURE

The TL;DR on the LDR

// BY MADISEN FINCH

LONG DISTANCE LOVE IN A DIGITAL WORLD

Gilles also writes her girlfriend a lot of letters. The difference between those who stay in a relationship and those who don't does not seem to be the depth of their emotional connection, but rather the ability to traverse the digital world in order to maintain deeper connections. As an aside, the idea of letters — love letters at that — poses an interesting question about the history of long distance relationships. While it may be true that in the modern age technology is foundational in maintaining connection, the history of letter writing and courting is often romanticized in the modern relationship. If every "Good Morning!" text sent is a 21st-century love letter, and if every FaceTime call is a modern payphone, maybe the narrative surrounding long distance relationships starts to shift. If the romanticization of the modern relationship overcomes the pain of missing someone, then maybe the effort necessary to maintain a relationship hindered by distance won't feel tedious.

Distance doesn't change the fact that relationships are a lot of work. All distance changes is what the work looks like.

Gilles might have the right idea. Maybe love letters are the modern solution to the age-old problem of separation, or maybe her solution speaks more to the attitude necessary to keep a relationship going. Maybe it is not the manner with which someone communicates, but rather the intentionality of it. So why might someone stay committed? At what point is it worth it to maintain that commitment? What does it take to maintain it? Maybe there is little hope in the age of isolation and miscommunication, but the effort to move forward regardless does matter. It may be implausible to move through four years with someone twelve hundred miles away, but it is not impossible. That relationship is hidden in modern love letters and payphone calls.

Contact **MADISEN FINCH** at madisen.finch@yale.edu

PERSONAL ESSAY

Escaping Instagram

// BY NINA BODOW

On Sunday, Sept. 14, I deleted Instagram. I'd love to have a well-thought-out explanation for why I held down the icon and pressed "remove app," but honestly, it was entirely on a whim. I was summoned by the anti-social media gods and took a stab at a lifestyle without a purpley-orange tie-dye app. Now, in its absence, I've given my Instagram usage a lot of thought. Yes, the anti-social media gods summoned me that Sunday afternoon, but I have been the one to actively decide to keep Instagram gone. Well, I kept it gone until Handsome Dan came into play. Here's how it went: The first 24 hours without Instagram were weird. I experienced withdrawal. And I don't mean that I was thinking about Instagram all the time, longing to scroll endlessly through birthday posts, sports memes and AI-generated reels of Elon Musk. I mean that my body was physically accustomed to its presence. Every time I'd go on my phone, my thumbs would be magnetized to the spot on my homescreen where the app had once been. I'd swipe down on my suggested apps page to go click on the icon just to meet a void-of-Instagram screen. It was only in the reminder of the app's absence that I comprehended how subconsciously attached to it I was. Only without Instagram could I see how often I'd unconsciously go to it without purpose. Sure, there were some consequences of not having it. I wasn't as plugged into recent events (but why is Instagram such a prominent

news source anyway? That can't be good). I forgot some birthdays (Instagram is admittedly a great birthday calendar). And, most notably, I had no way of looking people up. On a campus with roughly 6,000 undergraduate students, the amount of times a name is mentioned that I cannot place a face to or that I have never heard is, well, a lot. Instagram is a social Google. I underestimated how often I'd used Instagram for this. After two weeks on hiatus, I came to the rather simple conclusion that I was missing absolutely nothing. The main justification I have for my (over) use of social media is that it's a form of communication. But frankly, Instagram is the social media platform my friends and I use the least for communication. That justification is more relevant to my keeping of Snapchat (which I have yet to dare to delete ... maybe I'll write a part two). But as I mentioned, Handsome Dan interfered: my redownloading of Instagram came when I was posted on Handsome Dan's account. This was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. I was back. In all honesty, I could have just asked a friend to send me a screenshot. Despite all of the "enlightenment" that my hiatus gifted me, Instagram has an undeniably strong gravity. Some might call it addiction. I still felt a subtle pull towards that tie-dye icon, and Handsome Dan's Nina Bodow feature sucked me right back into the Instagram orbit. I wonder what it takes to hit escape velocity.

Contact **NINA BODOW** at nina.bodow@yale.edu

ILLUSTRATION BY LUCAS CASTILLO-WEST