This talk is based on work done with Joshua Spencer of UW-Milwaukee. What is the relationship between essence and necessity? A popular thought was that they amount to the same thing, or are, at least, materially equivalent. But Kit Fine (1994) convinced many that this isn't so; there can be necessary facts pertaining to you (e.g., you're a member of your singleton), that aren't correspondingly essence facts (supposing your essence is silent on whether there are sets). In slogan form, we can think of Fine as arguing for $N \not\rightarrow E$.

We want to argue that the relationship between essence and necessity is even more complicated: we argue for $E \not\rightarrow N$. That is, there can be essence facts pertaining to a thing that aren't correspondingly necessary facts. Some $x$ can figure into the essence of $y$, but without it being the case that, necessarily, $y$ exists only if $x$ does. We consider a range of metaphysical views that we see as committed to $E \not\rightarrow N$. But the bigger point, for us, is that $E \not\rightarrow N$ should be endorsed regardless of your stance on those metaphysical views. For an account of essence should not decide seemingly independent and substantive metaphysical debates by fiat.