

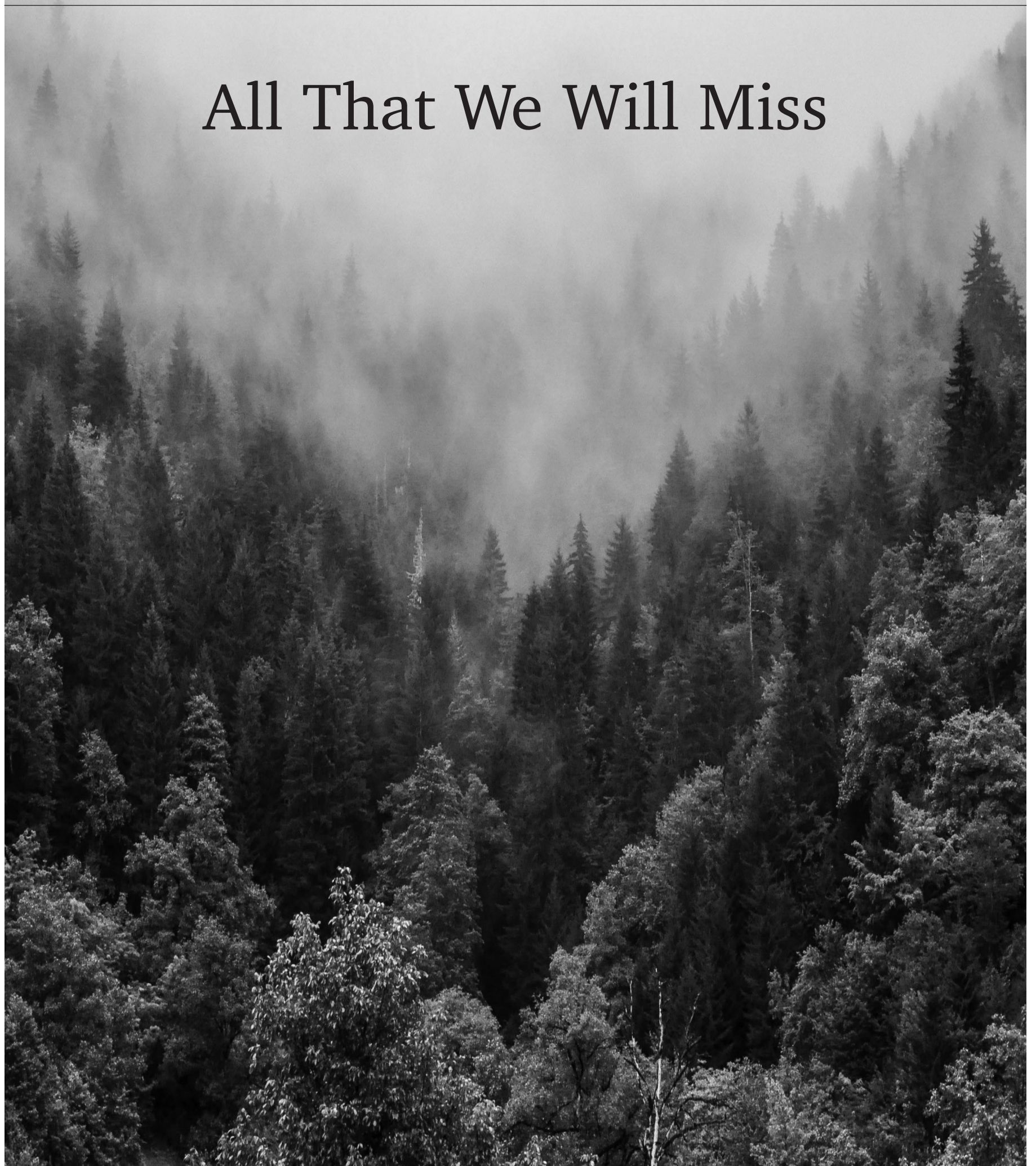
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All That We Will Miss



FREE FOR ALL

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Love Letters from Before the Descent

BY EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

If you had told me when I started this job that one day I would be shutting the newspaper down for a year, I would have told you that you lost your marbles. During my time at the Evergreen Journal, we have never missed an issue. Even before that, the publication never missed a publication deadline.

Sure, there were challenges. Late nights in the office trying to get all the facts on a story that we could before we go to print. Staying up to watch election results. In 2020, a strict Covid-19 schedule had to be enforced to keep our staff safe. There have been days when we didn’t want to go into the office. There have been days when the news was so horrible, so unthinkable, that

the idea of summing it up in one article felt like an insult to the public. But we have always gone to print.

Now, we are shutting down our offices for a year. It is not possible for us to take our printing press into the bunker, and with electrical limitations, there is no guarantee that we would even be able to run the press. Plus, there will be no way for us to circulate our physical copies. We tried everything we could to convince the UBC to let us bring our operations underground, but at this time, it is not possible.

The idea of going underground for a year is terrifying. We can all pretend that we are ready for the event, but we are lying to ourselves. I think, for many, the first comparison to come to mind was the Covid-19 lockdowns which took place the

majority of 2020 and early 2021. A feeling that we must sacrifice aspects of human life for the good of the whole. And despite knowing that this isolation was necessary for the health of others, the whole event was horrible. We are social creatures, and that outlet was taken away. And this time, we are going into a form of isolation without access to the internet. We are stuck underground with the people in our communities, and no one else.

It is okay to be scared, but I think that it is also a chance to reconnect with what it means to be human. To separate ourselves from distractions and really see other people. It is a chance to be scared together. So, if I had to give one piece of advice, it would be that: spend the next year seeing each other. Talk to each other. Sit in the

same room as others. Eat dinner together. Talk about your days.

I think this call to action also speaks to the lack of press in the bunker. Our newspapers will not be printing, but that doesn’t mean that the stories stop. I have been thinking a lot about how the press is viewed as the fourth branch of the checks and balances system. We are in place to keep the government accountable. So what happens when we aren’t publishing for a year? The people become the press. They become a check on the government.

So talk to each other. Publish local community newsletters if you can. Go to community meetings. Lodge complaints when it is necessary. Send telegrams to your loved ones in other bunkers. And in a year, we will be back to join you. ■

TO: THE SKY
FROM: ELIAS, 17, PORTLAND, OR, USA

“I’ve spent my whole life living under you and barely looked up. When I finally started paying attention, it was already too late — you were dimmer, thinner, tired. The chemicals we have been putting out have injured you. I used to think blue was just a color, not a miracle.

I’m sorry I only saw you when you were about to be taken away.

When we come back, I hope you’re not angry. I hope you still know how to hold light.”

TO: MY BALCONY GARDEN
FROM: SONJA, 63, BERLIN

“I left the basil to flower this year. I know I shouldn’t have — you’ll go to seed too soon — but I wanted you to have your chance before I went below. The bees came back in March, did you notice? Two of them. Maybe three.

Your damp soil smells like the first day of the world. I capture a small amount in a glass bottle. They said we couldn’t bring plants, but I think this is memory, not contraband.

If you grow wild while I’m gone, I’ll forgive you. In fact, I encourage it.”

TO: THE BROKEN THINGS
FROM: MALIK, 42, DETROIT, MI

“Factories, oceans, silence — I don’t know what we thought we were building toward. We were always patching holes with bigger holes.

I worked thirty years in manufacturing before my factory shutdown. Made parts for cars that never saw a road, batteries for machines no one needed. I’m not proud, but I’m not guilty, either. Just tired.

They say the year below is to let nature heal. Maybe it’s for us too — to stop mistaking exhaustion for purpose.

If the air tastes better when we come back, I’ll know it was worth it.”

TO: THE PEOPLE WHO REFUSE TO GO BELOW
FROM: ANN, LOCATION UNDISCLOSED

“You’re brave. Or foolish. Or both.

Part of me envies you — the risk, the sky, the stubbornness. Someone has to stay, to keep watch. Someone has to make sure the sun still rises.

I’ll imagine you shouting into the wind, rediscovering our place in nature.”

TO: THE OCEAN
FROM: KAI, 34, HONOLULU, HI

“Before the water got so polluted that it burned, I would surf every morning. The last time I went in, wading up to my knees before turning back, the water felt heavier. It felt like it was tired of carrying us.

They say you will be the first to heal. Without the ships and runoff and fuel, your tides will quickly remember their rythm. You will cleanse yourself.

I hope the whales come back and forgive us for our noise. I hope the reefs grow back. If when we come back, you sound like you did when I was younger I will cry.”

TO: THE MOON
FROM: JESS, 12, MELBOURNE

“You are my favorite thing in the sky. I used to think that you were made of cheese but now I know you are not. Mom helped me print pictures of you to take with me. One of each of your phases.

Please still be up there when I come back. Please don’t get lonely. I will blink really hard at you from underground so you know I am still looking.”

TO: THE SKYLINE
FROM: ENSO, 51, NEW YORK CITY, NY

“I used to measure my days by you -- which windows were lit, which cranes were moving, which billboards were changing. Now you are going dark, one window blinking out at a time.

I walked across the bridge last night and tried to see my reflection in the East River, but the water is too murky. The city looked like a ghost. People wandered through the emptying streets.

You have been loud and cruel and beautiful. I will miss you.

TO: MY FIRST APARTMENT
FROM: HANNAH, 26, ST. PAUL, MN

“I scrubbed your floors for the last time this morning even though no one will come after me for a year, maybe longer.

You were too small and too hot. Your wood paneling gave me splinters when I ran my hands over them. But you were mine.

I wrote my name on the wall inside the closet. Partically hidden so that someone would really have to love you to find it.”

TO: THE PROSPECT PARK TREES
FROM: J., 78, BROOKLYN, NY

“I used to sit under you every morning. Every once in awhile a leaf or acorn would fall down to greet me.

Soon, they won’t be able to fall far enough down to greet me.”

TO: THE INTERNET
FROM: KATIE, 22, SEOUL

“We were addicted to you.”

TO: THE WIND
FROM: AGATHA, 88, WALES

“The wind would rattle the windows of my childhood home violently. It would dry my mother’s sheets. It carried the voices of the neighbors across the fields.

I don’t know if I will hear or feel the wind again -- I am getting old and they won’t be creating artifical wind in the bunker.

I hope the wind still whistles in a year. Someone else will have to listen for me.

TO: THE MOUNTAINS
FROM: MILAYA, 49, PAKISTAN

“You watched empires rise and fall. You never needed our approval. You make me feel save, less exposed.

I have seen you every morning of my life. The first thing to grab my attention when I leave the house. Toorrow will be the last time for awhile.

I will see you soon old friend.”

TO: ALEX
FROM: LILY, 32, DEL MAR, CA

“We have waited far too long. Will you marry me?”

TO: GRANDMA
FROM: K., 27, SEATTLE, WA

“I wish would could have seen eye-to-eye more. You always used to say that climate change was a myth made up by the left. The mean part of me wants to ask you if you still think it is a myth. Now that the forest has burned down and the trout have died.

We aren’t going into the same communal bunker and part of me worries that I won’t see you again after this is all over.

I remember when I was younger and I use to call you for hours to talk about my day. We use to make Grandpa dinner when I visited and you would act like my re-heated Campbell’s Chicken Noodle Soup was gourmet. When did that go away?”

TO: THE PERSON WHO FINDS MY BIKE
FROM: ROSE, 19, BARCELONA

“It is chained to a lamppost outside the café with the green awning. The tires are a little flat, the breaks are squeaky but good.

If you happen to stay above ground and find it, take it. Ride it. Keep it moving for me. Maybe, I’ll come back for it one day.

Please don’t let it rust. It hates standing still.”

TO: MY SON
FROM: LILY, 42, ATLANTA, GA

“You were born two months before we went underground. I brought you into a world that you will not even get to see for a year.

I can’t decide if it is better if you don’t remember any of your time in the bunker, or if you do. If you don’t remember, then it will be like it never happened. You will only know the Earth in it’s pure glory.

But it will also be like our first year together never happened. Like I didn’t hold you every night and sing you silly songs about the surface you are yet to see.”

TO: THE WAR I FOUGHT IN
FROM: ETHAN, 56, COLVILLE, WA

“I spent two tours in Afganistan. I remember 9/11 and I remember being so afraid from 3000 miles away. I remember thinking that I had nothing better to do. It was enlist or stay on our families decaying farm.

I thought that I was fighting for my country and that my country would fight for me. But it didn’t.

I saw horrible things, I did horrible things, I had horrible things done to me. I pray that when we emerge, that not only the natural world will have healed. That we, as humans will have healed. Will have noticed how much better life is without this pointless wars.”

TO: LILY
FROM: ALEX, 35, DEL MAR, CA

“Let’s elope.”

TO: RORY
FROM: KATHERINE, 31, DENVER, CO

“You died almost exactly 16 years ago. I remember thinking that that day would be the worst day of my life. I’ve had other lows since then, but that day was still pretty damn bad.

And now, a little short of two decades later, I am preparing to go underground for a year. I keep thinking about how you will stay on the surface.

Moss will slowly overtake your gravestone, the cut flowers left there will wilt. The tree we planted in your memory by the soccer field will continue to grow.

When COVID-19 happened, I remember that it felt cruel that I was wishing you were still here. Cruel because it would have forced you to witness this horrible suffering. I wished to bring you back to life just so that you would be stuck in isolation.

Now I feel the same way. I wish you were still here. And that means that you would have to experience this suffering. I want to bring you back to life just so that you would be stuck underground with me.

Just so I could look over at you and say “huh, this shit is pretty wil isn’t it.” And then maybe you would say something funny that would make it slightly more bareable.”

TO: THE RESIDENTS OF EDEN BUNKERS
FROM: ANYNOMOUS

“Fuck you.

You get to go and live underground while the rest of us are stuck like sardines underground.

You are the reason we had to go underground in the first place.

You’re just cowards.”

TO: THE FORESTS
FROM: WALTER, 87, IDAHO

“I will miss you. And I hope I get to see you again. But I also hope you get time to heal.

When I was a boy we used to go out and pick huckleberries. Those berry bushes have stopped growing though. I hope they will come back for future people.”

TO: MY CAT
FROM: MANDY, 24, FUYANG, CHINA

“I am sorry that you will not be able to watch the birds while we are underground.

I thought long and hard about if we should bring you underground or let you stay above. Of coursre the selfish part of me always wanted to bring you along, but I understood that you might prefer it above.

But in the end, with you medication, it became clear that you wouldn’t survive the year above ground. Or maybe that is what I am telling myself to keep the guilt at bay.

I will pack your favorite toys and treats. There will be other animals for your to interact with which you have always loved. I hope you are able to forgive me that there aren’t any windows.”

TO: MY VINEYARD
FROM: PETE, 64, THE WILLAMETTE VALLEY, OR

Thank you for all you have done for my family. My grandfather planted you after he first moved to this country. You provided for him.

Since then, each generation has kept you growing. Expanding and attempting to embrace the commericalization without hurting you.

I hope you will welcome my family back when we return. I hope you get a chance to grow wild. You let your fruits fall on the ground and melt back to the Earth.

We will treat you better when we return.

TO: MONARCH BUTTERFLIES
FROM: DANIEL, 14, MEXICO CITY

“You are so beautiful. Your little orange wings that are paper thin.

We hatched some of you in school and I remembered wondering why we didn’t just let you be free. To fly north over us in your yearly migration and then back towards us.

I hope you enjoy this year without us. I hope you grow bigger and fly whenever and wherever you want.

And I hope we stop hatching you in school.”

TO: MY KITCHEN
FROM: ANDY, 32, CALGARY, CANADA

“I know that I used to complain that you were two small, but you were perfect. I knew where all the tools were, where all the spices were.

You let me burn food in you on accident. Practice makes perfect.

I will continue to cook underground, but I know it won’t be the same.

Til we meet again.”

TO: YOU
FROM: THE EVERGREEN JOURNAL

“Thank you for reading our paper and supporting us. We will miss you but are excited to meet again.

Remember, take this as a chance to really see people.

The stories still exist.”

