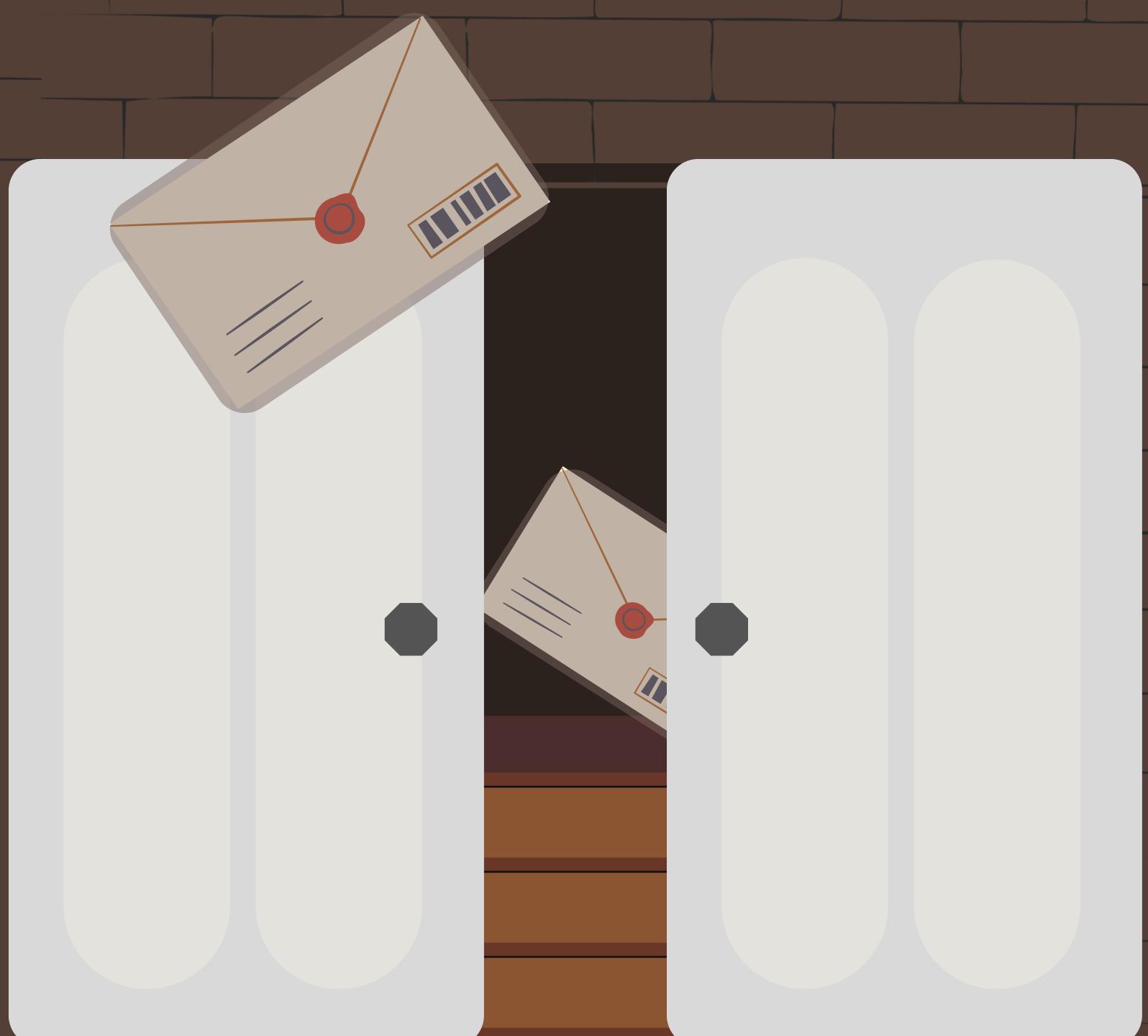
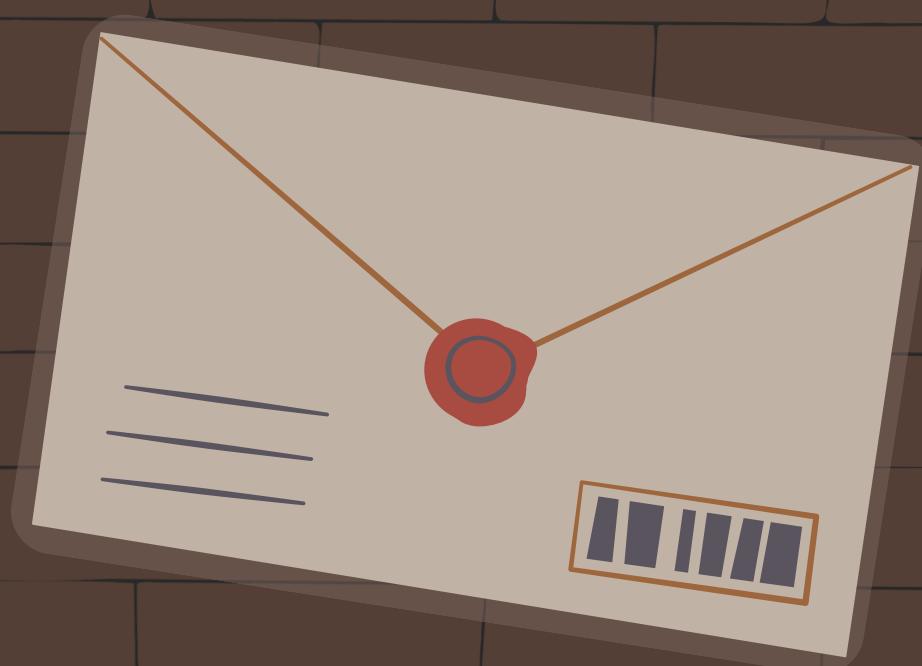


LETTERS I KEPT

Tecara Moyer



Letters I Kept

The clutter was driving me mad! In my closet sat an old white drawer I have had so long I no longer remembered how it found a home there. In the drawer lay dozens of worn and tattered letters and notes I had collected over the course of my entire conscious life. Birthday letters and Christmas cards scattered and numerous in the drawer, weighed it down with every extension and like arms holding the drawer open when attempting to force them back into their unlit cranny. There came a birthday, or a Christmas, when I could no longer force a single card into my conglomerate. That was the day the clutter entirely overwhelmed me. The letters had to be purged. If not for my own mental state, then for the simple fact that the drawer could not physically handle any more overfeeding. Into the heap I immersed myself.

With my newfound motivation, I engrossed myself in my work. I lifted the letters out of the drawer and onto the floor by the handful until it no longer sagged from the burden of my hoard. Once the drawer had been wholly unencumbered and I sat among my letters, the reading began. I picked up the first letter and made the decision based on memories and first-impressions whether or not to keep it. The memories of the letters were few and far between. For some, I remembered initially receiving or opening the letter as a result of interesting or eye-catching design. For others, I remembered the tender messages inside. However, there were some letters my memory had entirely forgone in favor of memories my subconscious deemed more important. It was with these forgotten letters that first-impressions became their saving grace or the reason for their demise. The only thing holding me back from discarding these forgotten letters depended entirely on their content and their sender. The content could have been remarkable, but if the letter was sent from someone I no longer liked or cared about, it became recycling. If the content was nothing special but sent from a deceased loved one, it was kept no

questions asked. There were some letters that did not fit into either of these categories and were kept for reasons that cannot be grouped. However, this was the method I used to sort through dozens of forgotten letters in an attempt to declutter my closet.

Out of the dozens of letters that had overfilled the drawer, I kept only sixteen. These sixteen letters are some of my most cherished possessions, as they are a special collection from loved ones for birthdays, holidays, and the most mundane moments that, with time, have become incredible mementos. The significance of these letters cannot be overstated. It is because of their importance that thirteen of the sixteen letters I originally kept will be analyzed for this book, and briefly discussed in this introduction.

The first three letters are from my best friend, Lauren. I met Lauren in the fall 2018. We worked together at Chick-Fil-A and both participated in the theater department of our high school, Coronado Theater Department. As a result, we became fast friends and have remained that way since late 2019. Lauren's love language is written affection. She is a sucker for long, late-night texts and conversations, cute hand-drawn pictures on sticky notes, and especially letters. Over the last six to seven years, Lauren has given me three cards. All three cards are not dated and do not include my age if they were gifted to me on my birthday, so the age of two of these cards can only be guessed. However, one card states that she was excited for what 2021 would bring, one card included a picture of us at high school prom, but the date of the last card is a complete mystery.

It might be easy to assume why I kept these cards. They were given to me by my best friend. They are keepsakes that pinpoint specific points in our lives and our friendship. They are from a time and a place in our lives that there is no returning to and no takebacks for. At least two of these three cards were written from before she started a relationship with her ex-husband

and I started my relationship with my fiance about five years ago. The version of Lauren that wrote those letters to me had no idea that she was writing these letters to the woman who would cry in the car with her while bonding over sad music when she was unhappy in her relationship, stand by her at her wedding despite it, and support her unconditionally when she decided to divorce him. I would have no proof that that version of Lauren ever really existed apart from the one that exists with me today in 2025 without these letters. Our friendship has been evermore cherished by me with my ability to call back to these consolidated memories in the form of letters and remember just how much we have been through together.

The next five letters from the collection of thirteen are from my immediate family. Three of which are letters to me for my eighteenth birthday. One of them from my mom, one from my dad, and one from my mom and brother combined. The other card is a little more untraditional and unexpected than a simple birthday card; my brother was required to send a student in another classroom a card when he was in 3rd grade, and he chose me as his recipient! He told me that I was the best older sister ever and gifted me a “good sharpened pencil” as a reward. These letters I kept not as a result of their content or design necessarily, but as a result of the senders being my immediate family giving me cards on some of the most socially important birthdays in my life. These letters specifically I kept because for years, children can’t wait to turn eighteen, “grow up”, graduate high school, and discover their freedom as a young adult. It was a birthday that had been anxiously awaited for many years, and both of my parents had made a conscious effort to write me cards for the occasion. My dad, a man who has been absent for most of my life and rarely sends something as thoughtful as a card, sent me a well-meaning letter on my eighteenth birthday. My mom wrote me another wonderful card on my 21st, the last exciting birthday until I turn 50, and I couldn’t bring myself to consider that letter from my mom as garbage. These

letters were nothing special visually, especially not the crumpled, folded, and withered letter written to me by my brother on the cheapest lined paper his 3rd grade self could find. In another country or society, my 18th and 21st birthdays may not have meant as much to me, but growing up in America, they became huge milestones in my life that I anticipated as long as I can remember. I expected my entire life to change when I hit those ages! Instead, as a twenty-four year old I now cling to the memories associated with these letters from my family as a way to remember the most anticipated birthdays that came and went much faster than younger me could have ever imagined.

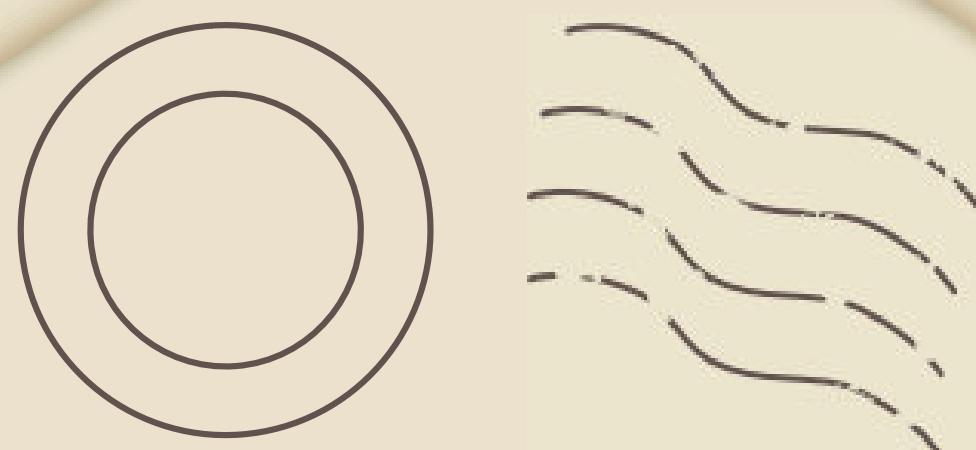
The last five letters are a wonderful mix of birthday letters from friends, Christmas cards from family friends, letters from my grandparents who've passed, and a letter from my old penpal. These are grouped miscellaneous, as I kept them for their sentimentality but did not fit into any specific category. My friend from high school, who I have known since 9th grade English class, wrote me a letter for what I can only assume was my 21st birthday with the inclusion of a clever "boo"ze pun, as my birthday is on Halloween. The envelope is the most beautiful I have ever received, as it is covered in drawings made specially by my friend. It has my name written in a spooky black font with bats in the corner, a birthday-hat-wearing ghost hugging my name, and a cat on the bottom sniffing a birthday cake in the corner. I had no choice but to keep this card, as it was one of the most thoughtful and time-consuming cards I have ever been gifted. Another card from the pile is a simple Christmas card from the Tamayos from 2015. They are a family we have spent every Christmas Eve with since around 2010, as they have a daughter who is my age and who, as a result of this Christmas Eve tradition, I have grown up with. The father and husband is no longer with us, and it is special to have a card gifted to me

when he was still alive, despite no personal message from him inside. In this case, the date and the sender is more important than the message or the aesthetic of it.

In a similar vein, my grandparents had sent me five dollars in a simple thank-you card reading “Will you be my Valentine?” on the inside. Both of my grandparents signed the card, and both are unfortunately passed and have been for some time. The next is a card from family friends Tim and Sally. I love them dearly, but I have kept this card in particular solely due to the fact that Sally creates all of her cards by hand from scratch! It is a meticulous process, and to throw away a card made personally by a family friend seems like a crime I was not willing to commit. The last and final letter from the collection of cards I kept is a letter from my old penpal Abby from Dubai, although I hesitate to call her a penpal as I never maintained correspondence with her. She always sent me letters and trinkets from the coolest countries and her and her parents traveled the world, and I rarely responded to the letters. This letter is one that I kept primarily out of guilt, as I could not bring myself to throw it away knowing that she took the time to write me a letter while on vacation in another country, and I never wrote back.

All of these letters vary greatly in style, size, content, form, and sender, but all of them were kept for very intimate reasons. They are cards that I could never consider trash, and when my dresser drawer struggles to close again in another ten years or so, I know I will find these cards again and be happily surprised that I kept the cards that can pinpoint me to rare and beautiful memories of old relationships and people that can no longer be found.

I would bet that you have a shoebox or drawer filled to the brim with old letters sitting somewhere forgotten in your house. One day, you will no longer be able to force any letters into it anymore. When that day comes, sift through it. Discover the forgotten messages, relationships, memories and emotions that you have left lying frozen in that drawer. You will not be disappointed in the different versions of yourself that you find buried there.



Tecara Moyer is a graduating English Major at UCCS. She has plans to become a high school English teacher and a book editor.