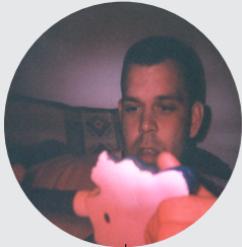


*Longing for
a Place
That Doesn't
Exist*



Past,
present, future

Take them
with you
leave them
Behind for
someone



Whitney, somewhere, 1998



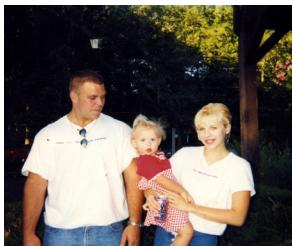
From left to right: my dad's sisters Amy and Julie, and my dad, Duane in the basement of 7414 N Hawthorne st. Along with our dog, Apollo (Poulo).



My dad's brother, Jake and I probably playing Super Monkey Ball on the GameCube.



Whitney and Alec and Gragra's house at 1750 Ackley st.



Dad, mom and me.



Bubba saying "hi"

A memory object is defined as a meaningful object that calls up memories.

A memory practice is defined as a custom that people practice regularly for remembering memories.



Dad and Bubba in the living room.



My mom, Alec and me swimming in the pool at our first house in Wayne.



My 6th birthday party in the backyard.

“Longing for a Place”

An essay about grief, understanding, adjustments, and coming to terms with who you are.

This project is dedicated to my family. The one's who are here and the one's who are not. To my mom and my brother. Just knowing there's someone out there that knows how you feel is enough.

that doesn't exist

Dad at our first house in Wayne.



Ashley and me playing in the leaves in the front yard.



Dad sitting in the kitchen.



Dominique and me.



Bubba and Maddie in Bubba's room. They are two years apart here.



My cousin, Remy sitting in a wagon outside our house.



This looks like my 4th birthday. It was Barbie themed.



Kindergarten, 2002

Bubba at the fundraiser we had for dad. I remember this being at the bar Grandma Jeanie worked at.



My cousin, Alyssa and me at Gragra's house.



You spend your whole childhood wanting to be an adult, thinking that some day it'll just hit you like a ton of bricks.

The thing about growing up

that no one tells you, is that one day things are just never the same, and they'll never go back to the way they were. The way things were is now just a very distant memory—a memory you can try to fondly recall, carefully compartmentalize in your head. You can try to retrace your steps and try to imagine that you're still your 16 year old self, however distant that may be, I still feel that way sometimes.

Suddenly you're in a four and a half year long relationship with someone who tries so hard to understand you but has just lived a different life as you and it's as simple as that. It's okay that you two are different. You now have two cats you have to look over, who demand all of your attention all of the time. You don't know how that happened, because all of your life you have been a dog person.

Suddenly,
you're 26 years old and wonder where all the time has gone. As you get older you remember that you're getting close to the age your dad was when he passed away from cancer. You've already passed the age your mom was when she had to put all the pieces of her life back together.

You had it easy.
You didn't have to process your grief until you were in your twenties. You got to move away from your family and start a new life under the guise of self protection. You got to escape all of the familial trauma and heartache that you were shielded away from anyways. You got to bask in the glory of being the only one in your family selfish enough to start a new life.

The only one delusional enough to actually think you could make something out of it.

I wonder if it's okay for me

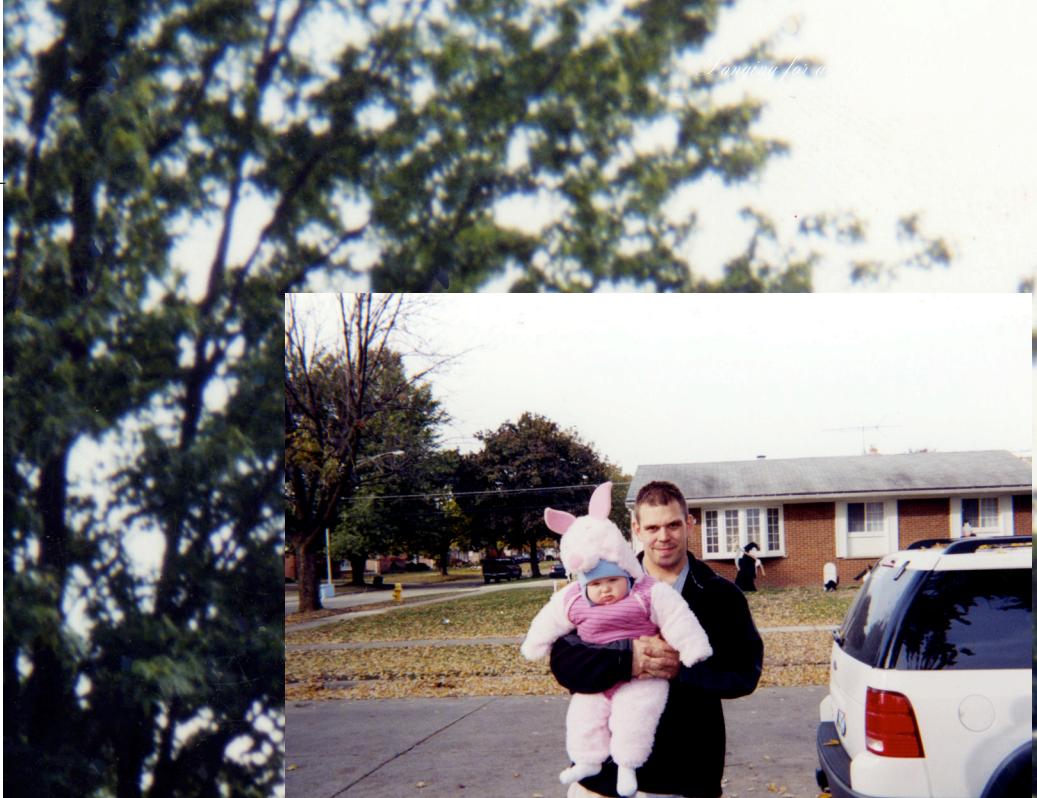
to have this much guilt about moving away from my family. A lot of people move away from their hometown. It's a normal and healthy thing to do. Moving somewhere new gives you a fresh start. The ability to see yourself in a different setting, a different way of life. It helped me grow as a person and learn a lot about myself. I was able to create a new identity. At least I thought it was—or maybe this has just been me the whole time and I was too naive to realize it.



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I miss my house in Westland too much. The gray cinder block porch I spent so many long nights on top of a fold out chair. Watching all the adults in my life crowd around me, with their glazing eyes, smelling of cigarette smoke, barely able to stand straight. I spent my childhood thinking I was one of them. One of the adults too inebriated to remember what day it was. I remember having fun and not even knowing that the whole world was crumbling around me. I remember loving the summertime. The buzzing sounds of cicadas and the flickering lights of the fireflies my cousins and I would catch in our palms.

It's weird to think that people so important in your life at one moment will suddenly be a memory the next. People you saw everyday. People you could call at the drop of a hat and they'd be there for you. People who you are connected with by blood, some not. It's all the same anyways. Is this adulthood?



Film No.
000041

FUJICOLOR PREMIUM PROCESSING INDEX PRINT

FUJIFILM

Date 29.05.02



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Date 29.05.02



On February 9th, 2024, I interviewed my mom, grandma and brother and asked them questions about their respective childhoods and memories. I learned that we all wish we were kids and life moves on too fast. Memories are precious and so are the objects attached to things.

What do you miss most about being a kid?

"[I miss] Not to have to worry so much, having fun, everything, it's nice being young. Getting old sucks."

What was your favorite toy?
[my]brown Carebear,
Fievel the mouse

What's your favorite memory when you were a kid?

My grandma gave me my first perm and I almost blacked out from the fumes. Being with my grandma and grandpa, watching 90210 with my grandma. Hot turkey sandwiches.

What do you miss most about being a kid?

[Being around] my parents, having no worries. You just play, go to school and be a kid.

What was your favorite toy?
Barbies

What's your favorite memory when you were a kid?

I loved hanging around with my family. We would take boat rides on the river and have lunch in Canada.

Complex Emotions

What do you miss most about being a kid?

The feeling of being able to relax. Innocence. The world is a bit brighter.

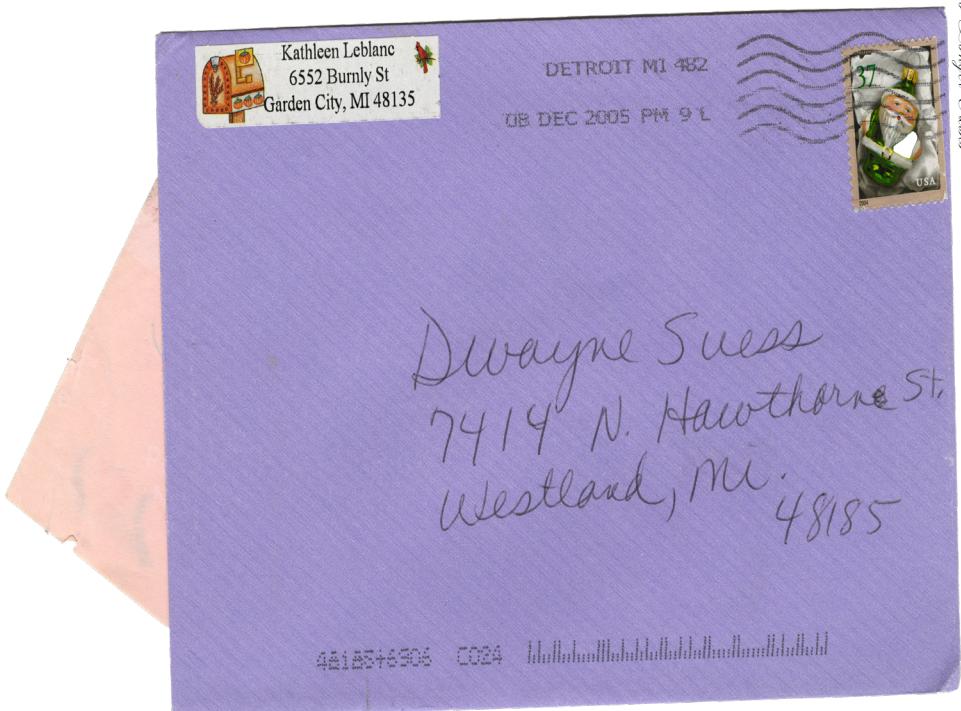
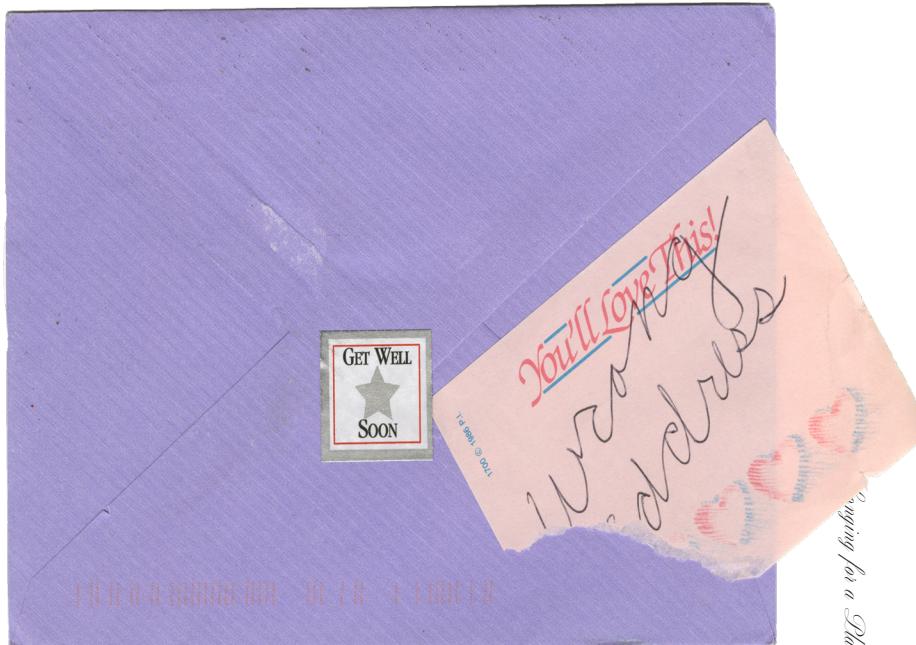
What was your favorite toy?

Hedgehog stuffed animal named "friend".

What's your favorite memory when you were a kid?

My favorite memory from my childhood is being able to play video games with my friends (key word: Friends). There was always someone I could socialize with whether kids in the neighborhood or friends online.

My favorite memory would be playing Minecraft with those friends during summer really late into the night



Is a part of growing up
losing all the connections
you had with your family?
Never seeing or hearing
from your cousins, your
aunts, uncles? You try
to reconnect with them
but everything fizzles
out eventually. You both
realize it's not worth the
energy to keep up the
charade. We have our
own lives. We were so
intrinsically a part of each
other's before, and now
we are strangers. We
probably wouldn't even
recognize each other on
the street. But in so many
of my photos we are
delighted to be around
each other. We are kids.
Happy and smiling
and being careless.

I hold onto photos of my
aunts and uncles existing
inside a space I thought
was all mine. I can't
imagine sharing anything
with them. I hold onto
these photos out of spite.
Out of stupidity that one
day we will all reminisce
together and share these
memories once more.
Holding onto these photos

feels disingenuous.
Like I never lived this life
that the photos proved I
did. I never experienced
this or had these thoughts
or emotions. I'm only
remembering how I
felt because the
picture told me to.

My mom and my
stepdad sold the house
in the summer of 2020.
The only place that to this
day, I can fondly call home,
was not mine anymore.
It belonged to someone
else. On that day in
August, when we packed
everything into the largest
U-haul truck they had
available, I lost a little part
of me. I Felt like I was now
someone else entirely—I
had no choice but to be.

*I hold onto all these
memories like baggage.
Baggage that I'm too
tired to carry. Baggage
that weighs me down
and crushes me. But I
continue to hang onto
these memories, thinking
I'll need them one day.*

Everything that was ever
familiar to me was now
gone. The neighborhood,
the city, the state, it's not
mine anymore. The Coney
Island down the street, the
McDonald's on the corner,
the Dairy Dan we would
walk to in the summer,
it's all gone. I can't help
but to think of how I felt
during summer vacation
in that home. I'd spend my
time outside swimming
all day, with nowhere
to go and nothing to
do. No obligations or
responsibilities. I'd come
inside and track water all
throughout the house,
something my mom
always scolded us for. I'd
make myself a sandwich
and get some warm
clothes out of the dryer
in the basement, the cold
brisk air immediately
hitting my face as I walked
down those carpeted
steps. Nothing will ever
feel like that again.





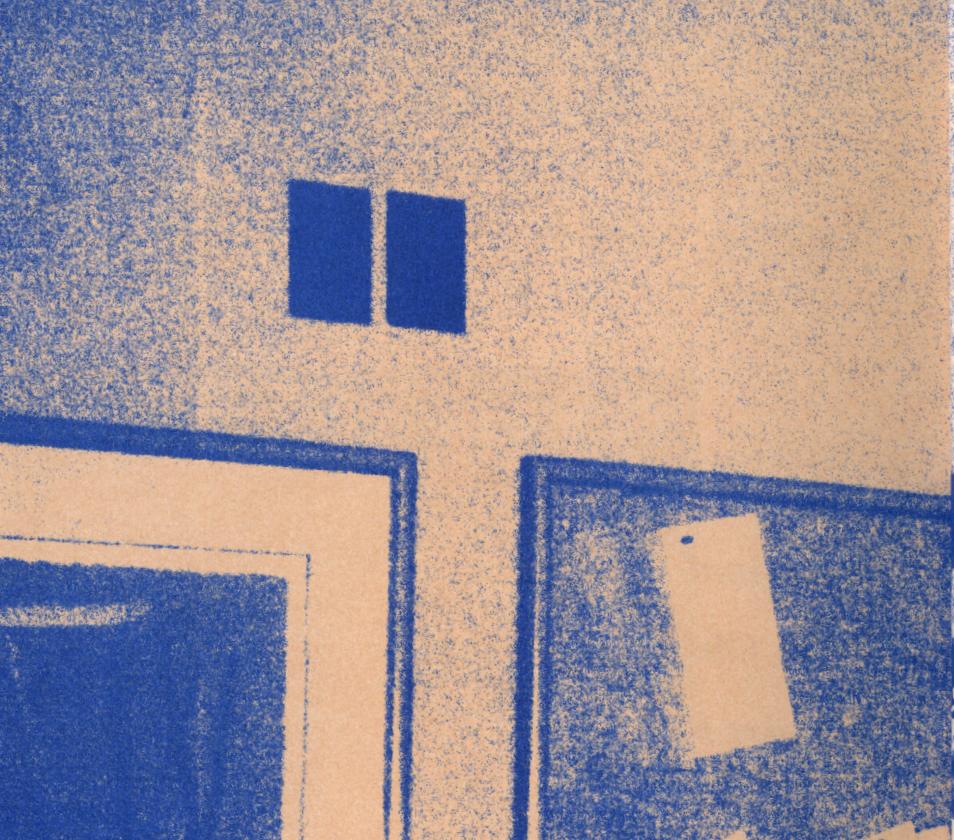
THINKING OF YOU
ALWAYS HOPE TO SEE
you sa

was pure chaos, but to everyone else it probably just felt like a normal day.
A normal day where you pack up everything you've ever felt familiar with and move to an entirely new sense of self. An entirely new surrounding. Your home isn't yours anymore—it's someone else's, and at the time everyone seemed okay with that. If we moved fast enough and acted like we didn't care about moving away at all, the emotions wouldn't be there. You move fast enough so they won't catch you.

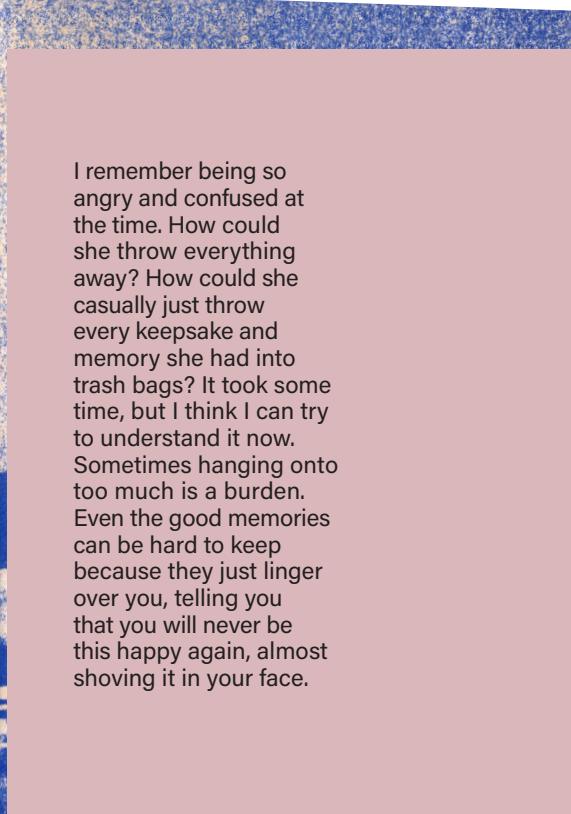
Stacy holding Remy
Remy was born on April 29



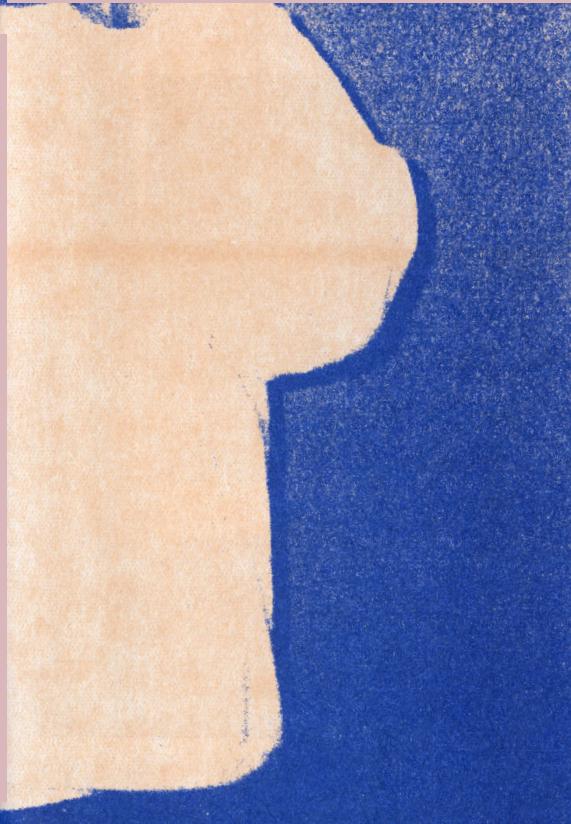
thday
Love you very much
Cra Cra



My mom was stuffing everything she could into trash bags. She didn't want to bring anything resembling her past life with her to her new one. She didn't want to remember anything—happy or sad, she wanted to throw everything away and start anew. She threw dirty dishes and laundry into boxes, almost like she was on the run from something. She threw away old pictures, handwritten letters, birthday cards that were shrouded about in the drawers of my dad's desk that we haven't opened since the winter of 2006.



I remember being so angry and confused at the time. How could she throw everything away? How could she casually just throw every keepsake and memory she had into trash bags? It took some time, but I think I can try to understand it now. Sometimes hanging onto too much is a burden. Even the good memories can be hard to keep because they just linger over you, telling you that you will never be this happy again, almost shoving it in your face.



uc e haulla

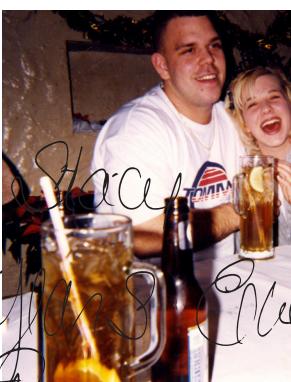
up north
Mabel

as Clark Hall haulla



26

Quano Stacy
New Years Eve
Party
Love P



Ihaulla ? Whentu
at Easter Queen Shandia

I think that, unlike my mother, that's why I hold onto so much. I like to be reminded of happier times. I like the idea of an object holding so much importance because of the history they have. I like the idea that I can look at an angel figurine on my dresser and immediately get transported back to my childhood bedroom on a spring morning, peering over the windowsill looking out to my pink rose bush that my grandma planted. I get sad thinking I left it there to die. I get sad thinking that I left a part of me there.



2 Boofoo

Gra Gra & Papa

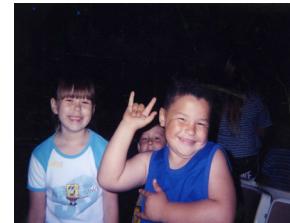
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I keep

every single birthday card
I've ever received in a box up
on the top shelf of my closet.
Covered in dust and only
accessible via step stool.



Rachel, Michael and me, 1998



Eman and me at our field trip
to the Westland Bowl.

All the birthday cards my
cousin, Whitney handmade
for me. Each one with its own
unique message and greeting,
but they all end with "I'll
always be here for you.
Love you, cuzzo."

The canvas she scribbled
on with colored pencil that
she gave to me for my 13th
birthday, including the holes
where I stabbed a pair of
scissors through when I
got mad at her.



Alec and Gragra's dog,
Jake at her house.

All of my dad's comic books,
the Pokemon drawing my
Uncle Johnny gave to me for
my birthday one year. My
Pokemon cards that I keep in
a binder three inches thick,
that I would color-code and
organize when I got bored.

These things feel too precious
to discard. Like somehow they
hold memories all their own,
even how mundane they are.
By keeping these things, and
presumably cherishing them
for lack of a better term, I'm
holding on to the past.

It's the only way I can
remember who I am,
or who I was.

Dearly and



Poulo, sometime

Longing for a Place That No Longer Exists



Dad and Me at the Wayne house.



Dad and Bubba at George and
Michelle's house

firmly and

not

letting



Ashley playing in the backyard.



Our neighbors, Valerie and Tony
and me playing outside.



Bubba drinking Mountain Dew.

go.

Hopefully I'll
see you there

