

A classical painting of Cupid, the Roman god of love, depicted as a winged cherub. He is shown from the chest up, with his head tilted downwards and to the left. He has golden, curly hair and is holding a bow in his right hand, with an arrow pointing downwards. His wings are large and detailed, with a mix of brown, orange, and green feathers. The background is a light, textured blue-grey color.

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VALENTINE'S EDITION, FEBRUARY 2025

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VALENTINE'S DAY



A DAY OF SUPERFICIALITY

BY DANAË KARTOUDE AND DAPHNE LIAPIS

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Valentine's Day: Roses, chocolates or hearts fill every store, painting the world in red and pink hues. But is modern Valentine's Day an innocent holiday based on the notion love?

To answer this, we have to place ourselves in the 18th century. A prime period for Christianity, specifically Catholicism. During this time, saints were regularly commemorated, through dancing, singing or praying. During February, Saint Valentine was celebrated. As a Roman priest, Saint Valentine was persecuted and sentenced to imprisonment. He was named a saint after caring for his fellow prisoners and the jailor's blind daughter, which quickly led to his religious authority. To celebrate his achievements, February 14th was established as Saint Valentine's Day, commemorating a completely religious holiday in honour of Saint Valentine. Simultaneously, a pagan fertility ritual was developed in February, and by the Middle Ages, the infamous poet Chaucer associated Valentine's Day with fertility, coining it as a day of love and desire. The sentiment developed with many people creating handmade cards with sonnets and love poems to trade with their loved ones. Eventually, by the late 18th and 19th century, as European nations started to industrialise, hundreds of cards were manufactured each day.



Similarly, by the mid-eighteenth century a famous chocolatier, Richard Cadbury, began to package his chocolates in heart shaped boxes. This trend was a huge success, with numerous other firms mimicking this way of packaging: red or pink heart-shaped food or memorabilia were often used as advertisement for their products. As a result, by the 21st century, Valentine's Day gifts for the most part, became cheap and accessible. However, for them to be sold for so little, mass exploitation of resources but also cases of forced labour increased. For example, in many developing countries such as Bangladesh and Nepal, these consumerist tendencies seem foreign as purchasing things to 'express love' is an unknown concept.

Beside the fact that Valentine's Day is marketed for couples in love, making it inevitable that sales for cheap colourful products will rise each year, through the consistent advertisements on social media, materialistic tendencies are developed in everyone. Even individuals who don't have a special someone adhere to these materialistic instincts as an act of defiance, or to simply feel included.

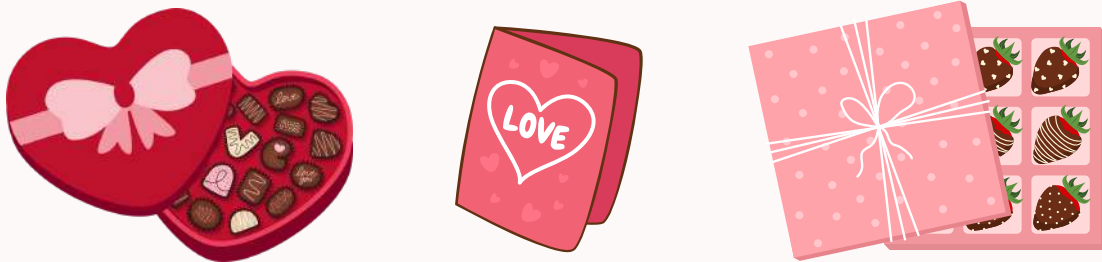


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Other than the plain fact that Valentine's Day consequently spotlights consumerism, it also unavoidably creates an overwhelming feeling of loneliness as the media tends to promote the desirable aspects of relationships which through overexposure contribute to the loneliness epidemic amongst young people who mindlessly accept the one-dimensional presentation of relationships.

This in turn, could contribute to the increasing desire to grow up, a sentiment heightened with the last couple generations. Although these issues arise consistently through social media, it is on Valentine's Day where these sentiments can be observed to a great extent.



We are all hopeless romantics, whether we like to admit it or not. So, spending Valentine's Day to affirm others as well as yourself that they are loved and appreciated is by no means something shameful.

But we must always remember that expensive gifts, chocolates and flowers are not a measure of love. Yes, we are flooded with overwhelming media and ideas which develop materialistic tendencies, but we also have critical thinking.

The media's role on Valentine's Day is a big part of the problems arising in society, magnifying consumerism as well as amplifying feelings of loneliness and we must learn to filter it. In a world where social media dictates most aspects of our lives, let's not let it dictate the only unpredictable human emotion: love.





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THE LONDON TRIP

BY REBECCA PETROU

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The London trip. The time of year that is anticipated by every Year 12 and Year 13 Drama student. The event which sparks jealousy and envy in students who made the *'wrong life choices'* as Ms Cosma always says when referring to those who did not pick Drama A-level. From West-End performances to workshops and backstage tours at our favourite theatres, the four-day trip is certainly imprinted into our minds, especially memorable to those graduating, who get to call this experience their final London trip with the school.

Our first show at the Harold Pinter Theatre was **The Years**, an adaptation of the novel by Nobel Prize-winning author Annie Ernaux. This production became the favourite for many on the trip, with every student choosing to write about it for the live theatre section of our written exam. The raw vulnerability of the performers that presented the female experience in combination with the incorporation of Brechtian techniques, left us deeply moved, many of us in tears by the end and even had an audience member fainting mid-show.

Later that day, we saw **Stranger Things: The First Shadow** at the Phoenix Theatre, a production which exceeded many of our expectations. While some of us doubted how the TV show would be adapted to the stage, it proved to be a phenomenal display of a technical spectacle, and the theatrical techniques we had studied in class. From the inexplicable stunts, with actors being flung through the air and falling in slow motion without a string in sight, to an entire ship appearing on stage for just a minute. The impressive set design and special effects alone left us all in awe.

Hadestown, the well-known musical, was another fan favourite, which had us singing its tracks for the next three days. *'The Little Foxes'* and *'Ballet shoes'* were the two shows we watched on the second half of the trip, which introduced us to the world of melodrama and family theatre, broadening our appreciation for diverse theatrical styles.



While it may seem like all we did on the trip was hop from theatre to theatre watching show after show, I can promise that our days were filled with many more activities. Each morning, our day started with a workshop at Pineapple Studios, based on a show we would watch later that day, led by professionals in the industry.



These workshops covered a wide variety of skills, including stage combat, monologue rehearsal techniques, script work and learning a choreography from **Hadestown**, directly from one of the show's performers.

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But that wasn't all. We were given the unique opportunity to tour both the **National Theatre** and the **Royal Opera House**. These behind-the-scenes private experiences provided us with an insight into the intricate work that goes into staging large-scale productions. From the technical aspects of set and lighting design to the meticulous costume and prop creation, seeing these renowned theatres from a different perspective deepened our appreciation for the industry and the sheer effort required to bring a performance to life.



Beyond our theatre-focused activities, we also had plenty of free time to explore the London scene. With many of us buying one too many books or plays at Foyles, or walking down Southbank, and shopping in Oxford Street and Covent Garden, each moment added to the excitement of the trip. These experiences not only gave us a break from our structured schedule but also allowed us to fully immerse ourselves in the cultural heart of the city.



As we boarded the plane home, exhausted yet exhilarated, we couldn't help but reflect on how much this trip had given us, not just in terms of theatre knowledge, but in unforgettable memories. From singing Hadestown songs in the streets of London to witnessing performances that moved us to tears, and questioning whether that really was a celebrity in the street (yes, we did see Fiona Shaw, Josh O'Connor, Thom York and Rebecca Ferguson all in the span of this trip) it is clear to us that the London Trip was not just about watching theatre, but living it for four incredible days and bringing back all we can to our own work in class.



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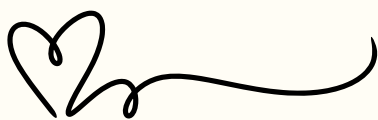
MISANTHROPIC MANIFESTO

BY STEPHANOS ARTEMIS

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Happy Valentine's Day. Notice how I didn't use an exclamation mark? That's because, frankly, I don't think that there is something to celebrate - Valentine's Day is just a Chaucerian concept that has been blown out of proportion. Seeing as I want to spread the holiday spirit, today, I present to you some of the most significant break-ups that I could think of. Happy reading (alone, presumably)!

It is only right to start with **Rihanna and Chris Brown**, one of the most talked-about breakups in pop culture history. The high-profile couple started dating in the early 2000s but broke up in 2009. In February of that year, just before the Grammy Awards, Chris Brown physically assaulted Rihanna which led to her being hospitalised, with the details of the incident highly publicised. Consequently, Brown was charged with felony assault. This undoubtedly affected both singers' careers, with Rihanna gaining widespread support, and Chris Brown facing significant backlash. Rihanna focused on her career and released best-selling albums whilst advocating for domestic violence survivors, while Brown worked to repair his image. The RiBryan break-up is definitely one of the biggest recent Hollywood separations. A blend of love, pain, growth, and change make this relationship and break-up stand out. It also serves as a crucial reminder that domestic violence is a severe issue, and that the process of healing and moving on isn't always easy.



Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes met in 1956, and swiftly fell in love, marrying later that year. The power-couple was highly influential in the literary world. Most notably, Plath gained fame for her poetry and her novel **The Bell Jar** (read it, I promise that it will not disappoint), while Hughes established himself as a poet.

Even though their marriage had the potential to be a loving and a lasting one, it was complicated by various obstacles, making the split tragic and tumultuous. Hughes ended the marriage when he left Plath for another woman, contributing to Plath's emotional turmoil. This, combined with the dissolution of their marriage, played a central role in intensifying her mental health struggles.



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Many argue that the tragic nature of their relationship not only influenced her poetry heavily but also made the story a notorious chapter in literary history. Unfortunately, Plath took her own life in February 1963, 3 months after the break-up, sending ripples in literary communities around the globe.

What would an article about break-ups be without the literal king of splitting up? As we all know, Henry VIII was married 6 times during his reign, effectively making him the subject of many history books and catchy songs.

Catherine of Aragon: Henry annulled their marriage because Catherine failed to provide him with a male heir. Subsequently, he fell in love with Anne Boleyn.

Anne Boleyn: After accusing her of alleged adultery and treason, Henry had Boleyn executed.

Jane Seymour: Unfortunately, Seymour died shortly after giving birth to Edward VI.

Anne of Cleves: Anne of Cleves was painted by the official Henry VIII painter Holbein. Henry saw the painting and was wowed, but was then 'horrified' when he saw her in person. That must make Holbein the master of Photoshop. Regardless, Henry annulled their marriage, saying that he found Anne unattractive and used this opportunity to claim that they were never truly compatible.

Catherine Howard: Their marriage ended in the same way that Henry ended his marriage with Howard's cousin; he had Howard executed after accusing her of adultery.

Catherine Parr: Parr managed to outlive Henry and went on to marry again after his death. She should be considered the lucky one!



Catherine of Aragon

Anne Boleyn

Jane Seymour

Anne of Cleves

Catherine Howard

Catherine Parr

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Yugoslavia began to break apart in the early 1990s, but the brutal dissolution is, no doubt, one of the most important ones in history. Indeed, the process of disintegration was very complex, involving both political tensions and conflicts.

1991: Slovenia and Croatia declared independence in June, leading to armed conflicts in both regions.

1992: FYROM and Bosnia and Herzegovina declared independence by April, leading to a war, one of the most devastating aspects of the breakup. Following this, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, made up of Serbia and Montenegro, was officially established, but it still faces internal and external challenges.

2003: The state was reconstituted and changed its name to the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro.

2006: Montenegro formally declared its independence.



When asked about the fall of Yugoslavia, renowned historian, Mr. Antoniou, said:

“The wound is still raw.”



There were a LOT of break-ups to consider, so I tried to choose some that seem more significant. Whether you are spending Valentine’s Day with your significant other, with friends, or alone, I hope that you have a good time and that you enjoy the day, even if it isn’t in the stereotypical way.



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THE USHER OF NEW SOUNDS

BY SELINA ELIA

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Love songs. Almost every mainstream song that ends up somewhere on the Billboard charts is about love. And who can blame those artists? Love is so beautiful. In the spirit of love and all its different forms (the soft, the painful, and the mildly concerning obsessions), here are four distinct, modern love songs:



- PLAIN WHITE T'S

HEY THERE DELILAH



A classic. Who doesn't know this song? And honestly, who doesn't hate it? Way too overplayed. But here's the slightly odd story behind it:

The lead singer of Plain White T's, though having written a record-breaking song about a beautiful woman named Delilah, never actually dated this very-real lady; he had briefly met her and they kept in contact.

The true Delilah admitted to being conflicted regarding her feelings towards the song flooding every place she went to: **“Part of me wants to scream at the top of my lungs that it's about me. Another part of me wants to cower and say it's not.”** Despite the band's frontman never getting his happy ending with Delilah, she agreed to accompany him to the 2008 Grammys. She got her 15 minutes of fame, and well, he received a Grammy. Win some, lose some, or something like that?

ABOUT YOU



45 seconds. That's how much time you have from when this song comes on to decide whether you should skip it, or otherwise spend the remaining 4 minutes and 41 seconds rethinking all your past friendships and relationships with every person who has entered your life since you gained consciousness.

- THE 1975



This poignant, nostalgic piece holds a plethora of emotions within it. As always with works of art, it is up to those experiencing it to conclude what it means to them. To most, however, it is a lament about a past love, made evident in the most famous line, 'And there was something 'bout you that now I can't remember', and 'I know a place/It's somewhere I go when I need to remember your face'. Overall, 'About You' is 5 minutes and 26 seconds of overwhelming emotion - to the extent that some cannot even last through the entire song without a lump forming in their throat or their eyes suddenly welling with tears.

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DAYLIGHT



- TAYLOR SWIFT

Can anyone truly mention love songs without uttering a word about Taylor Swift? Whether you love her or love to hate her, it is impossible to deny her role in the music industry, especially when it comes to romantic songs. After all, around 30% of her songs are about romance, while 20% are about heartbreak.

'Daylight' falls within the 30%, referring to the feeling of finding a partner who makes her world shine like gold, making all her past struggles of attempting to find love worth it.

Social media may cause you to adopt a skewed view of relationships and what they should constantly feel like; maybe filled with sparks? Always exciting and passionate? Butterflies taking permanent residence in your stomach every time you see your partner? No - in fact, many will tell you that it is quite the opposite. It feels like coming home, a stable, calming person to return to and lean on. Taylor Swift refers to this in the lyrics 'I once believed love would be burning red/But it's golden'. Let this serve as a reminder to all of us that our relationships might not always feel like something novel and out of this world; they might just cause us to feel at peace with ourselves.

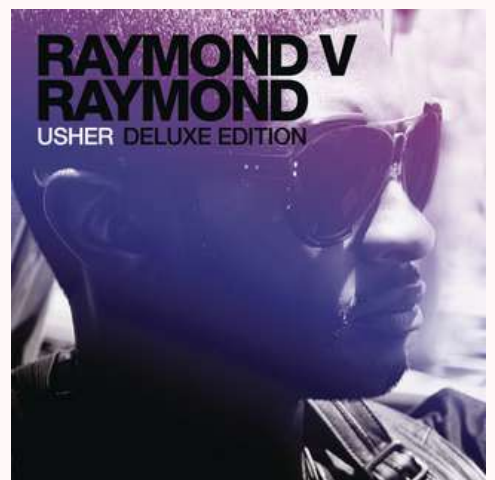


This song is for all the readers who relate to the title of this edition: death to Valentines! Yes, it is about falling in love, hence the title, but that only applies if you're hyperfixating on the lyrics.

Through the collaboration of the most iconic 2010s artists, Usher and Pitbull, a song with the liveliest beat was born. The undeniable 2010s appeal of this platinum-certified song can make even the most pop music-hating person want to dance the night away. Usher even said it himself, through the line in the chorus: 'So dance like it's the last night of your life'. Luckily for all of you who do not have a partner to spend Valentine's Day with, it conveniently falls on a Friday. Grab all your single friends, drag them to a club (or your house for a nice dinner if they're not club people), and pray the DJ decides to play this song! Who said Valentine's is all romance-centered? Why not let it be platonic?

DJ GOT US FALLING IN LOVE

- USHER FT PITBULL



The background is a classical painting. In the center, a woman with blonde hair, wearing a voluminous red and white dress, holds a long staff or scepter. She is looking towards the right. In the lower-left foreground, a man in a dark coat and white cravat looks up at her. In the lower-right, a cherub-like figure is visible. The scene is set in a lush, wooded landscape with a large tree on the left and a path leading into the distance.

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VIDEO ARCHIVES

BY NOAH NATHANAEL

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I know i've been accustomed to giving you all a platter of films to add to the watchlist but this month i had the brilliant idea of putting something which can't be put into words as my articles sole focus. I'm sorry if i was fawning over it for a page and a half, but i just can't help myself.

NORMAL PEOPLE

(2020) – DIR. LENNY ABRAHAMSON & HETTIE MACDONALD:

Nobody prepares you for that feeling of being apart from someone you used to be a part of. There's no indication or warning that says to have loved, you will eventually lose. That doesn't exist. To experience love authentically you have to commit yourself to it without that knowledge. You have to be able to see the value in someone where you never managed to see in yourself.



This series is quite literally heartbreak materialised. It unashamedly epitomises what it means to be a 'normal' person – stupidities and ugly points included. Through 12 soul-crushing episodes, we follow the lives of Connell and Marianne as they weave into each other's lives during high school in Sligo, Ireland and university at Trinity College, experiencing life separately yet staying connected through that mutual desire to love and be loved. That deadly, undying feeling. Mental note - by the end of each episode, about half of which you will find yourself screaming into a pillow, and the other half you will have deluded yourself into believing you're moving closer and closer to fluency in the Irish accent.

Search Normal People on google and you'll find words like 'devastating' or 'tragedy', but what makes their heartbreak so notoriously saddening is how beautifully it presents the love which precedes it. Connell and Marianne embody the idea that 'home' not as a place you either crave or resent, but as a person you keep going back to.

Even though they're god-awful at communication, these two always find each other, and that connection fuels their innate need to fight and gives the audience a reason to fight for them too. Subtleties like kept promises or stolen glances consume the screen, expressing the weight of their love as it relates to the weight of their existence. The familiarity they share with each other's eyes, their hands, their scent. These characters are written so humanely it hurts, and like love, this show, and its very existence, functions devoid of any voice of reason. You will forget yourself while watching this and thank me for it.



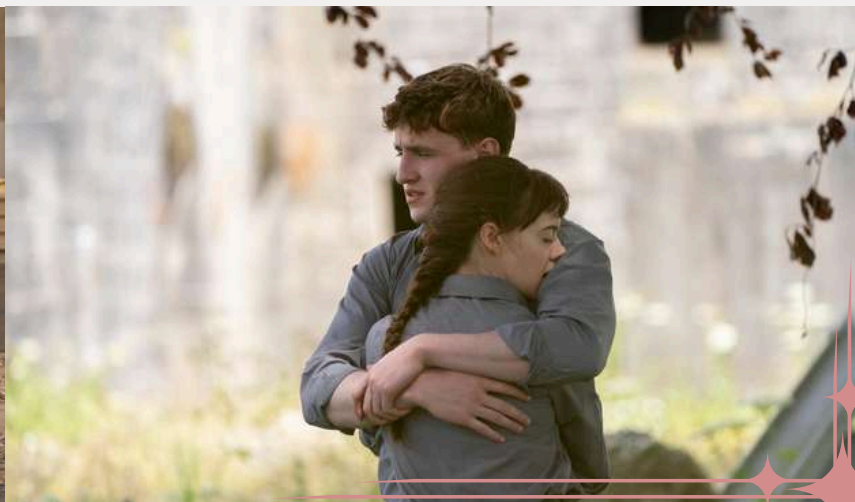
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Articulating the rawness and intimacy they share much more eloquently than I have is the paragon of introspection herself: Salley Rooney in a quote not from the series but from the book it was adapted from :

I'm not a religious person but I do sometimes think God made you for me'.

If that doesn't convince you to watch it, I don't know what will. This quote is also why I self-indulgently believe that effectively immediately, we should change the way calendar years are designated to - BNP (Before Normal People) and ANP (After Normal People).



When they're alone though, they're alone. Cut to Connell crying outside the Debs. Cut to Connell crying in therapy. Cut to Connell crying sat across from Marianne. Snapshots of his depression in university haunt me still. That numbness. That disillusion. Like the sentiment of getting ready for bed when you haven't truly woken up yet. Having that sense of longing for someone being so invasive you can no longer bear to even imagine them anymore. Feeling like your entire life is performative, as if you're **'trying on a hundred different versions'** of yourself trying to find one where you're happy when you don't even know who you are.

Even more problematic is our ignorance as people on the effect we have on the people we love. At the start of the show, his naive confusion in what he wanted augmented Marianne's perception of what she was worth, and so the series navigates her discovery of the self-love she never knew, brutally isolated in Episode Nine. Christ, Episode Nine. Episode Nine is probably the worst thing to happen to Sweden since Denmark. Just putting that out there.

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These characters suspend each other to a place greater than themselves, and they're hurt for it. The deniability in something as simple as walking past Connell unrecognised, leaving her clueless. Either she had died, and he could no longer see her, or it wasn't real, and she had never existed. Yet, she holds on. To rather be heartbroken than forgetful. To rather be distant than hurtful. Even if its done in the effort of letting go, it's spawn is a place of longing for a solace which will not come, like the search for one person within the eyes of every person you meet, knowing none will be theirs.



HONOURABLE MENTIONS:

CALL ME BY YOUR NAME

(2017) - DIR. LUCA GUADAGNINO



LOVE IN THE AFTERNOON

(1972) - DIR. ERIC ROHMER



PAST LIVES

(2023) - DIR. CELINE SONG





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TALES OF LOST LOVE

BY LEONIE WEIDERUD

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Valentine's Day is often a celebration of love, but for some, it marks a tragic end. Long after the roses wilt and the chocolates are eaten, in the darkest corners of history, where passion met sorrow, ghostly legends endure—spirits are trapped by the heartache of forbidden love and broken promises.

A DEATHLY LOVE TRIANGLE

In the oldest city in America, deep within one of the oldest masonry forts, the spirits of two forbidden lovers are forever entangled in the web they once wove. The Castillo de San Marcos in St. Augustine, a Spanish military fort built in 1672, hosts the spirits of two lovers, where the sights, sounds, and smells of the two still linger in the historic fort. The most telling sign being the wafting smell of a particularly sweet, flowery and strong perfume, engorging the nostrils of passersby, and a feeling as if they're being watched. Visitors have quoted:

"Once you smell the strong scent, the hairs on the back of your neck will stand, leaving you with the feeling you've just encountered a restless spirit."



Others spotted a woman in a flowy white lace dress wandering the grounds and halls, and many see bright lights or orbs. According to legend, a local man was exploring the fort when he heard a hollow sound coming from one of the walls. After removing a few bricks, he exposed a hidden cavity in the dungeon. Inside, he found the skeletal remains of two individuals chained to the wall.

In 1784, Colonel Garcia Marti and his lovely young wife Dolores arrived at Castillo De San Marcos. An important man of great stature, extremely busy with his professional life, he wasn't the most devoted husband and often ignored his wife, too occupied with the fort and its soldiers.



He had a young assistant, Captain Abela, who was more around Dolores' age. Abela was charming and full of life and as such, Dolores took an imitate liking to him and vice versa. Hence starting the affair which would lead to their deaths. Dolores was known to be a lover of perfumes, so when one evening Colonel Marti smelled the strong smell of his wife all over Abela, he immediately suspected what had happened. By the next day, Dolores and Manuel were nowhere to be found. When questioned Marti told his soldiers that Dolores had become ill and was sent to Mexico to recover, while the young captain was sent on a special mission to Cuba.

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His story was strange since Dolores didn't seem ill and Abela would've never left without saying goodbye to his fellow soldiers, but despite the doubts, the Colonel was never questioned further.

About 50 years or so later, a hidden room was found in a dungeon behind a brick wall. The remains of a woman and man were found along with a whiff of sweet-smelling perfume. Although never proven it is suspected that Colonel Marti had kidnapped the couple and locked them away. Leaving them to starve within the dark, cold walls of San Marcos.

A CRY IN THE WATER

The ghost of Minnie Quay is a legend in the paranormal circles of a small town in Michigan. The stories in the area say you must leave something on her headstone, or she will follow you home.

In the mid 1800s, The Quay family, father James and Mother Mary Ann, and 15-year-old Minnie Quay lived in the town of Forester. At the time, Forester was a busy lumbering town and a busy ship port for boats hauling lumber to various places on the Great Lakes.



Like many young girls who lived in ports, she fell in love with one of the sailors who would often dock in Forester. Not much is known about the gentleman, only that the relationship was greatly disapproved of in town, especially by her parents. Her own mother would often yell out loud enough for others in town to hear that she would rather see her dead than with this man and forbade her to see him again.

In the spring of 1876, word reached Forester that the ship that the young man had been working on had gone down in a storm. Minnie was torn and heart-broken especially since her parents had forbidden her to say good-bye when he last left.

A few days later, on April 27, Onlookers watched in horror as, she committed suicide by plunging off the town pier and into the icy cold waters of Lake Huron. She was buried in the Forester Cemetery on the north end of town, but most say that she does not rest in peace.



Her ghost has been said to roam the beaches of Forester, walking along the shore of Lake Huron. She is said to cry mournfully for the spirit of her lost love, for whom she seeks but never finds. Over the years several young women have reported that Minnie has beckoned to them from the icy waters to their death as if inviting them to join her, in her watery grave of despair.

It is even said that one girl drowned after claiming that she saw Minnie one night...



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T & T
TAYLOR SWIFT
AND TRAVIS KELCE

BY MIKAELLA VAN ZUTPHEN

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In September of 2023, a monumental event occurred in the realm of sports. This had nothing to do with the usual sporting events: the Superbowl, Champions League, or even the Women's World Cup. Instead, this year marked the beginning of the greatest love story of all time... that is, the relationship between the musical superstar Taylor Swift, and her heartthrob boyfriend, Travis Kelce.



Taylor's attraction to American football players has its origins in the music video of the hit single released over a decade ago. The cinematic wonder that accompanied **'You belong with me'** featured a young highschooler (played by Taylor Swift) trying to steal the boyfriend of another young highschooler (also played by Taylor Swift). Just fourteen years later, this vision came to fruition when Travis – a tight-end for the Kansas City Chiefs – made their relationship official to the public.

Travis Kelce's track record with women hasn't been the greatest. His ex, Maya Benberry, made her opinion of him clear on the Daily Mail when she said that he was "once a cheater, always a cheater." The rumours didn't end there, as there was speculation of Kelce's infidelity in the relationship that followed with Kayla Nicole.

If ever there was a person that could handle Kelce's antics, it's Taylor. As she herself once admitted, she has also "got a long list of ex-lovers," most of which will apparently claim that she's insane. Furthermore, Taylor has expressed her confidence in being able to "make the bad guys good for a weekend."

Taylor Swift has exhibited her undying devotion to Kelce on numerous occasions. In 2024, for example, Taylor travelled directly from her show in Tokyo to Las Vegas in order to make the Super Bowl – a true testament to the seriousness of their relationship. This touching display of love, however, is perhaps soured by the fact that her carbon footprint that year was equal to almost thirty relatively large households in the USA. In other words, Taylor emitted more CO2 than the average Indian does in 4,300 years.



Although the couple are still going strong, perhaps it would be better for the world's general environmental stability if Taylor was to turn to her blue-eyed lover and utter the words:

"We are never, ever, ever, ever getting back together. Like ever."

The background of the entire page is a classical painting of Cupid and Psyche. Cupid, a winged cherub, is shown in the upper left, holding a bow. Psyche, a woman in a yellow dress, is in the upper right, holding a bunch of flowers. The scene is set in a dome with a blue sky and white clouds. The painting is framed by a decorative, ornate border.

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BOOK CORNER

BY SOPHIA DOMBO AND ANNA PAVLOWITCH

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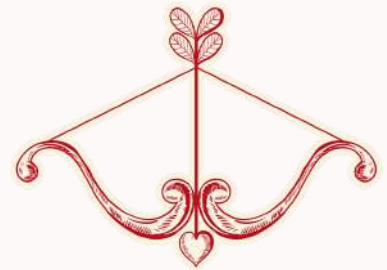
I have something to admit. I have made the radical executive decision to exclusively read non-fiction this year. I can hear you all gasping with terror and to that, I urge you not to cry, fret, or fear. I will more than likely completely disregard my decision the moment I come across any novel with a good cover and a semi-interesting blurb, so this whole non-fiction thing might just be for this month. On that note, this month we are ditching all the boring, fake, Valentine's Day stuff and focusing on the more appealing matter of systemic oppression. In all seriousness, my reviews this month are of books concerning important topics I honestly feel so strongly about recommending, so I hope you all feel inspired to go pick them up.

ON WOMEN

SUSAN SONTAG

I loved this. I have thought about this book every day since the day I read it and I mean that with full sincerity. As a collection of Sontag's essays, the book dives straight into some of the most widely experienced systems of oppression from the misconceptions surrounding ageing to the commodification of the female body as a perishable good. The issues she unearths are at times caustic, often relatable, and entirely true. To me, it is not necessarily that Sontag says something new or different to what most twentieth-century feminists are saying, it is her cutting articulation that sets her apart. Her sentences are consistently shocking, and invigorating, inspiring a certain level of rage out of the female reader in a way very few essayists manage. Aside from her feminist writing, the final two essays that critique the 70s fascination with the aesthetic and cultural imagery of fascism, a topic terrifyingly not so removed from our modern-day context, was a pleasant surprise.

Sontag sheds light on the importance of diffusing violent radicalism not just through judicial systems but, most importantly, through social and cultural reform. Anyway, I love intelligent women, and Sontag passes that test with flying colours. Recommend, recommend, recommend.



Susan
Sontag



On
Women



THE VIRIDIAN



I read this a couple of months ago and felt that Ernaux left a lot to be desired, and for the most part accepted my less than favourable opinion, until I saw it in theatre. It is not often that a book is less impactful than a screen or stage adaptation for me. This is big news. This is the kind of cutting-edge journalism I'm here to deliver. So, this is a public service announcement to inform you all that if you are in London at any time over the next few months, you need to get off Oxford Street and find your way into the Harold Pinter Theatre to watch this masterpiece of a show.

I know that technically this is the kind of thing the Arts section is going to talk about, but I'm using the fact that the script was entirely, and I mean word for word, the entire novel as grounds for shared custody. This semi-autobiographical story about loss, ageing, culture, dreams, women, men, and politics is a melting pot of memories, those remembered, forgotten, and imagined. I felt nothing for this book two months ago and now I want to live inside its words.



ANNA'S RECOMMENDATION



ONE DAY

DAVID NICHOLLS



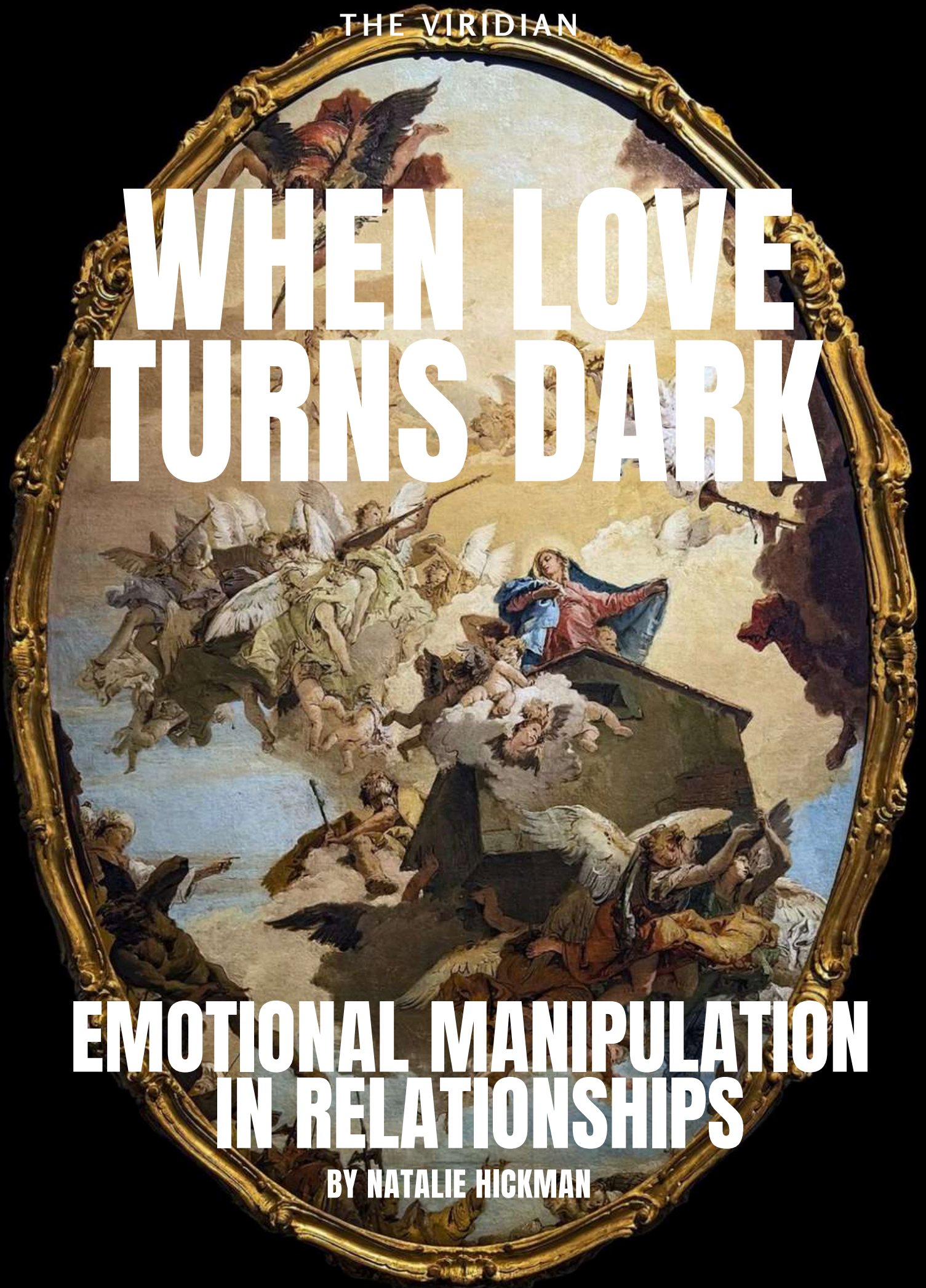
On the 15th of July 1988, Emma and Dexter meet for the first time at their university graduation and from that day onwards, they can't stop thinking about each other. We see their lives in snapshots – every 15th of July for the next 20 years – as they navigate through their twenties and thirties in a torturous sequence of missed opportunities, anguish and heartbreak. The embodiment of right person wrong timing, these characters touched me to the very core. There'll be laughter, there'll most definitely be tears and it's absolutely worth it.

THE VIRIDIAN

WHEN LOVE TURNS DARK

EMOTIONAL MANIPULATION IN RELATIONSHIPS

BY NATALIE HICKMAN



THE VIRIDIAN

Once glorified as a day of love, Valentine's Day has become a stark reminder that the stories we hear about romance often omit the darker, more insidious realities—where affection can twist into emotional warfare. These themes can be seen in Tamino's song "Indigo Night," in which he reminds us that while love may be celebrated, it can also give rise to manipulation and emotional turmoil that often go unacknowledged in our traditional narratives.

Emotional abuse can be very subtle, often disguised as "tough love." Unlike physical abuse, emotional abuse leaves no visible scars, yet its effects can be long-lasting and even traumatic. In "Indigo Night," Tamino emphasizes this trauma with the line, **"Still I feel like I'm a walking machine | Watching it all through a screen."** Here, he showcases the lack of control typically felt by victims, illustrating the vulnerability of watching an abuser and feeling powerless to act against their manipulation. Emotional abuse encompasses behaviours such as gaslighting, constant criticism, controlling actions, and emotional withdrawal.

Tamino vividly embodies isolation, and the boundaries created, seen in the words, **"And he cries, 'Why can't I sing along with some feeling, or some meaning?'"**

His voice is full of passion here, contrasting sharply with the character's sense of disconnection. Throughout the song, the only verses sung with vitality come from the traveller's son, highlighting the stark emotional disparities. Victims may feel confused, isolated, and fundamentally flawed due to their partner's unrelenting negativity and manipulation.

Recognizing the signs of emotional manipulation is crucial for healthy relationships. Here are some behaviours to watch for:

- **Gaslighting:** This tactic makes the victim doubt their perceptions or feelings, causing them to feel unsure of their reality.
- **Silent Treatment:** Withholding affection or communication as a form of punishment can leave a partner feeling unworthy and confused.
- **Blame Shifting:** A manipulative partner often deflects responsibility, making you feel guilty for their issues or behaviour.
- **Love Withdrawal:** Choosing to withhold love and affection to control or punish the other person.



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The emotional toll of abuse can lead to anxiety, depression, and a diminished sense of self-worth. For example, in the line, **“Whose lives aren't as lost as mine,”** Tamino's vocal intensity breaks the melancholic and serene vibe of the song. This moment represents the frustration the traveller's son feels with the happy and carefree girls around him while he grapples with profound sadness (his life feels lost). Victims may find it challenging to escape their partner's grasp, feeling trapped in a cycle of dependency and fear. While love should uplift and empower, these relationships create a heavy emotional burden that can be overwhelming.

Healing from emotional abuse takes time and support. Tamino encapsulates this struggle when he reveals, **“they all sing | About the pleasures of life.”** This moment provokes an epiphany for him, showing that his way of finding happiness (traveling) was neither effective nor lasting. He then expresses, **“I feel like I've always been blind,”** marking a significant awakening even after having **“seen the world's most beautiful places.”** Individuals must recognize their worth and seek help, whether through therapy, support groups, or confiding in trusted friends. It's vital to establish boundaries and prioritize emotional well-being, giving oneself permission to walk away from harmful relationships.



As we celebrate love this Valentine's Day, it's essential to remember that not all love is healthy. By understanding the signs of emotional abuse and seeking support, individuals can reclaim their power and seek the loving, supportive relationships they deserve. Love should never turn dark—it should bring light, joy, and fulfilment into our lives.



THE VIRIDIAN



**Thank you for reading our February edition!
Stay tuned for our March issue,
out next month.**



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