

EDITORIAL: 'Leave It Alone', Mortality, and the Certainty of Love and Loss

By **Murjani Rawls** - Apr 23, 2020



Photo: Youtube

I like to take random drives. Sometimes, it's to wrangle a little bit of stress out of the washcloth of the day. Other times, it's to flesh out some ideas or listen to new music. Traveling miles on an open road can be a different antidote from person to person. There's almost a therapeutic hypnotism to it.

On that drive, 'Leave It Alone,' the second single that **Hayley Williams** released from her *Petals For Armor* project came on shuffle. Have you ever listened to a song where the lyrics snap you into a sort of introspective thoughts? You say to yourself, 'Wow, I didn't think of it that way.'" Some of the best songs I've ever listened to made me both think and feel things simultaneously.

Any avid **Paramore** fan over the years, myself included, would be familiar with the powerful vocal performances of Williams. With this song, her vocal style is more subdued. It goes along with the subtle nature of the guitar. It's no less beautiful than her other performances. You can hear the tiredness throughout the inflection of her voice. If Paramore's 2017 release, *After Laughter* was an almost tongue-in-cheek way to dance through pain, Williams' solo songs were her embracing the nakedness of her vulnerability.

There were two parts of this song that got me thinking. Lines within both verses that stuck in my brain and would be even more prominent to me in the weeks to come. I just didn't know

how they were going to manifest at the time.

*“Now that I finally wanna live
The ones I love are dyin’”*

Spring and summertime are periods where people look forward to being out in the open. It's our recess. We all congregate to beaches, vacations, and gatherings to make new memories. Then, COVID-19 happened. Concert halls, which are a sanctuary for many are silent and dark for the time being. I walked out of an almost empty AMC theater not knowing when I'd be back. Many have lost jobs, family members, and friends without warning. Even the concept of being together has taken on a whole different meaning. Now, staying away from each other is the best thing that we can do to keep each other safe.

Whenever this is over, how apprehensive are we going to be around each other again? It a time where the weather started to get warmer and the days got longer, everything got put on a timeout. In the time that we were getting ready to rejoice in all the beauty that nature has to offer us, loss is the only common denominator.

*“Who else am I gonna lose before I am ready?
And who's gonna lose me?”*

Days seem like they melt into one another. The sounds of sirens are as prevalent as the birds that chirp outside my window every morning. In the blessing of being young, there's some naivety that comes with it. Broken bones are a simple payment at the toll. Any sickness, you assume you can come back from with the vigor of a superhero. This virus doesn't discriminate by age or background.

As it stands now, [over 190,000 people](#) worldwide have unfortunately passed away. Death is a non-negotiable part of life. While you're living, that fact seems to be background noise. You get caught up in the routines that you become. A wave to the mailman here. A purchase of a latte at your favorite local coffee shop there. Now, waking up to bad news seems to be the conditioned response that we don't even flinch at. Even with any precaution taken, you can become sick or pass the virus without knowing. It's like every farfetched science fiction screenplay has come to pass.

Now, we are confronted with death daily – almost hourly. You can't get away from your finite sense of mortality. In her interview with [Beats 1](#), Williams speaks about the song, almost losing her grandmother, and having a period being surrounded by death. As a creator, it seems like you have more time to make things. We live in a world where the standard measurement is how much you can produce. In a world that can surely benefit from the community and love that art brings, it's hard to birth creations under the constant threats of death. Therein lies the conundrum; we are always told to leave good things behind, but it's that one question. When? The concept of 'when' seems like an even more immediate possibility.

I still go on a couple of drives since the shelter-in-place started. It's a dose of normal that I can still hold on to. As we're approaching a world that is unfamiliar, the white lines are a reminder of a world that we may never go back to. Or at least with major alterations to it. In the video of 'Leave It Alone,' Williams is emerging from a cocoon. How are we going to come out of this? My only hope is that when we emerge from ours, we do it in a way to make every interaction more meaningful. That we savor each grain of sand between our toes and hold on to each a hug a little tighter.

"If you know love, then best be prepared to grieve." It's impossible to have love without loss. I feel that now more than ever. If grieving is here to stay in the time of prolonged uncertainty, I'm going to both give and experience love to lessen the blow.

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