**Love in infant monkeys**

* Author: Lydia Millet
* Main character: Harry Harlow
* Plot summary: American experts in psychology claim that too much maternal affection weakens a child, and Harry Harlow is a researcher who aims to refute this argument. In order to make his argument, Harlow runs an experiment in which he separates newborn monkeys from their mothers, in order to prove that a mother’s love and care is absolutely essential for infants. The researcher himself has had many failed relationships, his wife is terminally ill, he is addicted to both his work and alcohol, and he experiences nightmares in which he is confronted by the grieving mothers of his infant lab monkeys.
* Themes:

1. Animal abuse: the story refers to how “Rats were dropped in boiling water, cats pinned down for months until their legs withered, dogs irradiated until their skin crisped, monkeys shot in the heads and stomachs, or immobilized to have spinal cords severed.”. Animal rights were not very strict during this time period, and as a result, researchers were freely allowed to run inhumane lab tests on various animals.
2. Deprivation of love: The story describes the symptoms experienced by baby monkeys that are isolated from their mothers, and this proves that severe psychological damage is caused when infants are deprived of their mother’s love. Similarly, the researcher does not express or receive love of any kind from his spouse, or his co-workers. The only solid relationship that he has is with his work, and with the alcohol that he consumes daily. This deprivation of love makes the researcher apathetic to the emotional pain endured by the lab monkeys, and insensitive to the suffering experienced by his ailing wife.

* Setting: University of Wisconsin
* Style and formal elements: incomplete sentences such as “Lab was empty” and “Legs felt heavy” 🡪 they work to characterize him as someone who doesn’t even have the time to form complete thoughts; he’d rather spend his time working monotonously and without care for the people around him
* Relationships

1. Harlow and Peggy: Peggy is Harlow’s second wife, and she is a cancer patient who is terminally ill. However, despite his wife’s condition, Harlow claims that he “Hadn’t seen her for more than five minutes since what, Tuesday?”. This illustrates that Harlow seems to be uncaring about his wife’s poor health, and prioritizes his work over all his other relationships and responsibilities.
2. Baby monkeys and Harlow: Harlow doesn’t seem to care about the infant monkeys that he is testing on, and continues his experiments mercilessly, despite the evident suffering endured by the newborns, as they are separated from their mothers. These animals may become psychologically damaged due to the lack of love and support that they should be receiving from their mothers.