

Reply to an almost lover
by Rebecca N. McKinnon

Formulation of a question:

“Today I have been thinking about what it is like to miss something. Today I am missing nothing in particular, but the feeling is there like ghostly hands wrapping around my heart. Not squeezing, not pulling or pushing... just touching, making its presence known. I miss. Strange, isn’t it? I feel like you know the feeling.”

Test subject:

My love,

Hypothesis:

Missing is one of the strongest feelings imaginable, stronger even than love.

<u>Observations:</u>	<u>Analyses:</u>
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<p>Imagine you don't love someone anymore. When they finally leave, you're relieved. The next morning you make eggs that taste nothing like the eggs they used to make. And so, in the midst of that relief comes missing, an uninvited guest in your lonely kitchen.</p>	<p>When love fades, missing remains, triggered by the strangest of occurrences.</p>
<p>Imagine you hate someone. When you finally cut them from your life, you're relieved. Years go by, and life stagnates. You remember the passion of your hate. In many ways it was better than the contentment you feel now. In the midst of that contentment comes missing, a caesura in the sentence of your happiness.</p>	<p>Missing is versatile and alive, surpassing the staying power of both love and hate, which missing can thrive without.</p>
<p>Imagine you must choose between two positives. When you finally do, that positive becomes a negative; all your life you remember the unchosen option. You fantasize about what could've been, what might be now, and what the future would've held. You miss all these things you've never done, are not doing, and will never have.</p>	<p>Missing makes even the most logical choices irrelevant, monopolizing your mental energy in a way that other feeling does not. It is a time traveler, taking you simultaneously into and away from the past, present, and future.</p>

<p>Imagine yourself, my love. Missing is with you for no one and nothing in particular.</p>	<p>Missing is a category of feeling that stands on its own. It fucks other feelings, but it doesn't need them. You cannot blame other feelings for the way missing chooses, seemingly at random, to be alone with you.</p>
<p>Imagine the end of this experiment. You set this letter down and try to forget it. You're good at forgetting. All it takes is getting yourself lost on purpose—lost in your words, in their voices, in that pipe, in the bottle at the bar, in the melodies, in the bedsheets. You forget my words, but you miss the way you felt before you read my goddamn words.</p>	<p>Missing makes its presence known and, most of the time, asks nothing from you other than to acknowledge it, to allow yourself to feel it. You cannot run from it. You can only let it change you.</p>

Null hypothesis:

It is determined that missing is, indeed, stronger than love. However, if you let missing change you, the original hypothesis is incomplete. If missing changes you, it has transcended itself. It has evolved into longing. Longing is stronger even than missing. Further experimentation is needed.

Alternative hypothesis:

Longing is the strongest feeling imaginable, stronger even than missing, which is stronger even than love. Missing is thinking of how far the moon is and wanting to cry. Longing is missing the moon so much you are willing to die in a spaceship bound for its surface.

Conclusion:

Yes, it is strange. Yes, I do know the feeling.

The scientist:

Love always, Rebecca