

DEADLINES AND DIVINE DISTRACTIONS

Miranda July
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Dear M,

When you called today I think it was to wish me a happy birthday — but you got carried away with describing everything you were doing in Denver. As I listened I resolved not to remind you, thinking: If we can make it to the goodbyes and hang up without you remembering the reason you called, then *that* will be a sort of gift (the gift of being able to tell everyone you forgot to wish me a happy birthday.) As the call drew to its end I got nervously excited, hoping it wouldn't all be ruined at the last minute — but no, you never remembered. I've been able to add this story to the fact that we are all sick and no one gave me a present. Quite a tasty soup of self-pity.

I didn't really explain *how* sick I've been, because of our long history of me trying to elicit comfort and you exploding with anxiety instead; sometimes even becoming perversely angry at me as you sense your own failure. For safety, I tuck myself neatly away, into my perfectly self-created world. Let's take a moment to acknowledge how hard I've rocked that dynamic, how much I've managed to get out of it.

Wow.

And now, since it is still my birthday, let me indulge myself, in this theoretical letter to a theoretical woman: on Saturday I had a fever of 103 and couldn't find anyone to help me, so I was alone with Henry, who didn't really understand why I was such a bad playmate. The greatest challenge was taking the sheets out of the dryer and putting them on his bed. After each corner I had to lay down and rest on the mattress, the room spinning and my body throbbing with aches. The whole process took me about 30 minutes; I kept telling myself: *this is ok, it's just taking longer, but I'm doing it*. That night it seemed like my whole life had been this hard and always would be, but that it didn't matter, all that mattered was doing one thing after another until each thing got done. And in fact, this is true — my whole life is like that. One foot in front of the other. How could it be any other way, anyone's life? I had to act a bit with Henry; I made my voice reassuring to let him know everything was fine even though I couldn't really stand up.

The next day he was sick too and this was actually easier because he was less

spirited. We listened to audio literature; Anne Hathaway reading *The Wizard of Oz*. If I ever meet her I will have to commend her on this work. Her reading of *The Wizard* himself was particularly off the wall — being far creepier than it was written. For example Oz would be described as saying something “meekly” and Anne would read it in the voice of a child molester riddled with perversion and only pretending to be meek. *I wonder how much she got paid for this* was my reoccurring thought. I could never do it (not that anyone’s asked me to) because I don’t know how to read from my diaphragm. I can barely read aloud to Henry each night before my throat gets so tense it hurts. Just one of many things I keep meaning to get on top of. But will I ever? I can only keep trying.

Yours, of course, and love, of course, despite everything,

Miranda