Mary Anna Evans

An Experimental Study:
Cleaving the Bond Between A Physicist and An Engineering School Dropout

Authors
Me and…No, Just Me

Abstract

I investigate the distance in space and time necessary to break a love bond between two people. This problem is multifactorial, as the bond was both chemical and physical, but not (I hope) metaphysical, in which case it cannot be broken in this world, whereas I was pretty sure it would not stretch all the way to New Jersey. Findings are inconclusive.

Hypothesis

Love cools, as all things do. The universe is headed for a heat death, its free energy spent. Why should love be different? It follows that sufficient space and time will vanquish love. My hypothesis was that New Jersey was far enough and that a week was time enough.

I hypothesize that you are still wondering what the hell happened. (And also where the fuck I am.)

In short, I hypothesize that only two conditions are required to break a bond that you say never existed: seven days and, if my odometer is accurate, nine hundred and sixteen miles.

Introduction

To investigate the unknown, you must assemble that which is known, ponder it, turn it over in your hands until it is as familiar as the worn key that unlocks the front door of the house where we don't live any more. Or, in engineering parlance that you may remember from a time before you gave up on the discipline, one must list the given information.

Given:

1. Water freezes at 0^{o} Celsius. In so doing, it expands. (I will remind you of such things from time to time, because thermodynamics was the course that sent you scurrying to the "Change Major" portal of the university website.) Water can break a vessel unlucky enough to be holding it when it freezes. This phenomenon calls to mind your heart and mine. Mine was the weaker vessel, yours the icy one.

2. Your heart was the only cold thing south of Georgia. New Jersey's temperature approaches its frigidity but, like any asymptote, will never equal it. Since my arrival in the Garden State, I've observed that the water fraction of

the air routinely freezes and falls to the ground. The natives call it "snow." When this first happened, I ran to the window, waiting for the end. First nitrogen would go, then oxygen, then…well, when oxygen goes, oxygen-breathers go, too. I planned to use my last lungful of oxygen to yell, "Oh, the humanity!" as everybody froze, because I'd always wanted to do that. As it turns out, it only gets cold enough here to turn water into stone. Oxygen is safe.

3. Speaking of lungs, when those words spewed out of yours, I heard flight calling. But how far would I need to fly to escape the sound of you saying you'd never loved me? Assuming your lungs are of average size, and I think they are, I estimate they held 1.16×10^{23} molecules of air when you emptied them in my direction. After some time spent calculating how far I'd have to go to ensure that I never encountered any of those molecules again, I gave up and decided that New Jersey was probably far enough.

4. But I want to revisit water and ice. When the temperature plummets and wet highways flash-freeze, friction becomes unreliable. This happens regularly in New Jersey. Maybe friction will behave as it's supposed to behave, as it always did in Florida. Or maybe one's car will decide it wants to travel sideways. This is disconcerting. But not so disconcerting as waking up without the warm smell of your skin overlaid with a trace of yesterday's deodorant, and not nearly so

disconcerting as my memory of the exact angle at which you cocked your head when you wanted things your way.

5. And another thing about ice. It fractures. It cleaves into wicked blades. Icicles impale the ground where they fall. Hearts, however, seem anomalous. Human flesh is more water than not. It stands to reason that icy hearts would be the ones to shatter, but no. Warm and living hearts break when bared to those who won't return the favor.

Given this knowledge of water, ice, and hearts, I will now attempt to make sense of…well…of everything.

Method

My method was to get in my car and drive.

Findings

1. My hair still smells like you.
2. The urge for murder abated somewhere near the Florida-Georgia border, thus defining the murder-radius at approximately fifty miles.
3. The urge for murder briefly recurred as I passed into Virginia and, again, upon entering New Jersey. Perhaps border crossings merit further investigation but I've driven far enough. Come spring, I might test the borders, one after another, Maryland, Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia, your doorstep. Perhaps a knife, sharp

as fractured ice, will set your head at a new angle, not a natural one. Maybe it will expose the heart you kept for yourself.

4. Until then, I wrap myself in the blanket we brought back from Mexico. It is warm as a vacation sunburn. I don't think of you, not much, no, I only think of you when I want to be on a highway going south but the snow is keeping me here.

Conclusions

Regarding my original hypothesis, it seems that New Jersey was not far enough and a week was insufficient. Regardless, I feel warmth, even heat, at my center, and it suggests that there is no ice in my heart. If anyone could have put ice there, it was you, so it cannot be done. This unexpected finding suggests that the physical body is a near-ideal insulator; outside conditions cannot affect inside conditions. The converse is also true; I burn inside and there is nowhere for the pain to go.

I wait for thermal equilibrium. If I cannot reach it, I will come for you in the spring.